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# Informal helpers : an exploratory study of a role and its contexts.

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INFORMAL HELPERS:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A ROLE AND ITS CONTEXTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

DAVID H. WALKER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
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Psychology

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DEDICATION

To sisyphus who understands

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to the members of my faculty committee for their critical advice and interest throughout the course of this study. Stuart Golann offered useful technical assistance; William Kraus provided realistic perspective; William Dorris offered numerous productive insights and I only regret the brevity of my contact with him. I would like to extend special gratitude to David Todd, friend and advisor, who has been the most important influence in my professional career. His orientation to community and individual psychology directed me to a perspective that could agree with both my personal and professional ideals.

I am also deeply grateful to Sally Ives for her hard work, support, and advice. Both she and her husband, Donald, through their very special friendship, shared much that will never be forgotten. Finally I thank my best friend Fran Frome for being who she is.

## ABSTRACT

Informal Helpers:  
An Exploratory Study of a Role and Its Contexts

(September 1976)

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A descriptive, exploratory study was conducted with 13 informal helpers in university dormitories. A nomination and interview process was used to identify persons who frequently provide support or assistance to others without regard to duty or compensation. Such helpers are viewed as an important community resource, which might be enriched through preventive intervention, given an appropriate knowledge base. Existing research provides few guidelines.

The general goal of this study was to propose and illustrate a systematic procedure for defining and understanding the complex activities of informal helpers. Drawing on an interactional role perspective derived from work in both organizational and community psychology, the following specific goals of the present study were formulated: (1) to describe the role dimensions of a given number of helpers in a specific setting; (2) to describe the nature of the personal, interpersonal, and setting influences on this role; and (3) where possible, to discuss the interaction of these variables

in determining the helping role.

Each of the 13 respondents was interviewed about their helping role, developmental history, perceptions of their setting, personal self concept, and the scope and nature of their interpersonal relationships. Based on these interviews, the helpers' roles are summarized in terms of 11 descriptive dimensions and their interrelationships. Influences of the personal, interpersonal, and setting contexts of this role are illustrated by detailed presentation of four cases. Several important dimensions were observed within each major context for each helper. Important similarities and differences in the helping roles of these four helpers were analyzed in terms of variations in the context dimensions and major contextual patterns that were observed. Discussion focused on the potential use of this analytical framework for comparing other helping roles in other settings, and on the implications of this interactional system approach for designing future research and developing preventive interventions with informal helpers.

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## PREFACE

The present research on informal helping originated from three major influences: an interest in consultation, a strong belief in preventive interventions, and numerous rewarding personal and professional contacts with persons I have come to call informal helpers. These helpers were involved in providing support and assistance to others in a manner that appeared to exceed the average expectations of duty and friendship. Often they seemed to be involved with persons who could not or would not seek help from more professional sources. Many of their helping contacts came at a considerable expense to their own time and personal pursuits.

After a period of time I have become convinced that informal helpers could provide an important focus for preventive community interventions. I believe there is a definite need for continued expansion of preventive approaches to community care giving, and that determining the natural coping resources in a given community or setting is integral to such approaches. My observations suggest that informal helpers provide an important natural coping resource in many communities. If these helpers could be included as contact persons for supportive consultations, I feel certain they will represent an important means of increasing the primary resources of a community while causing a minimum of disruption in the natural flow of activities.



When I attempted to understand informal helpers and their activities, it became quickly apparent that no single construct such as life style or a personality profile would provide a sufficient explanatory framework. The informal helpers with whom I was acquainted included high school teachers, teenagers, university faculty, school dropouts, lawyers, secretaries, and graduate and undergraduate university students. They differed widely in religious, social, and political orientations. A thorough search of the available literature produced only a smattering of articles pertaining to informal helpers. None focused on helpers' personal development and their daily functioning in a natural setting. The present research was designed to begin to understand who these people are, and why they are so active in informal helping. I considered this to be an essential first step towards my long range goal of developing effective preventive interventions that would involve informal helpers through supportive professional consultation.

The following chapters describe an intensive study of 13 informal helpers. This study was developed to form a working conceptualization which could eventually be applied to a variety of informal helping roles and in different social settings. Chapter I focuses on the place of informal helping in the life of the community and its possible role as a basis for preventive intervention. Chapter II introduces an "interactional framework" as a means of developing

a comprehensive understanding of the complex informal helping process. This perspective is then used to present brief reviews of the literature pertaining both to informal helpers and to the more general dimensions of informal helping behavior. Chapter III reviews the specific context and goals of the study and Chapter IV presents the methodology. Chapter V draws on case materials to present some descriptive dimensions of the informal helping role. Chapter VI presents four cases to illustrate the interaction of personal, interpersonal, and setting variables as they influence the informal helping role. Chapter VII reviews the conceptual analysis of the helping role presented in this study and discusses its implications for both research and preventive interventions with informal helpers.

## C H A P T E R    I

## Community and Sources of Social Support

Social support is an essential component of the effective community process. Mutual aid among community members has existed from earliest times, but with society's increased sophistication has come an ever-expanding professionalism in the support and care-giving process. At the inception of the helping professions a conceptualization of support existed that emphasized a direct and remedial approach to personal dysfunction. More recently the professional approach has expanded to include the concepts of indirect and preventive approaches. As Cowen (1973) argues, the passive approach of waiting to intervene until a person or system has become dysfunctional is no longer wholly suitable given the current press of human problems. Cultural, financial, demographic, and educational factors all serve to limit traditional therapeutic interventions to a narrow segment of the population in need. When they do elect to seek help from professional agencies, people are frequently frustrated or rejected outright because of complicated application procedures and constraints and pressures on overworked personnel (Weiss, 1973). The paraprofessional movement has been a partial answer to these needs, but, as Andrae and Burstein (1973) illustrate, persons who seek out a professional clinic are often disappointed at being "relegated" to a paraprofessional regardless

of ethnic or economic compatability. I believe that, while it is important to continue developing a full range of professional services, it is imperative that we expand our understanding of indirect and preventive approaches to developing individual and community support. Further I consider the informal support process of a community to be a primary focal point for such approaches.

### A Definition of Informal Support

Before we can discuss intervention, it is necessary to understand the nature of informal support. Informal support is a process that everyone has experienced in some form. It can range from providing a small favor to helping someone cope with a major emotional crisis. The availability of informal support, when effective, reduces the demand on already overburdened professional services. If informal support is not available, the difficulties encountered in seeking professional support may delay the help seeker's return to an optimal adjustment. In more extreme instances, major dysfunction may result in the help seeker's complete removal from the natural setting. The advantage of informal support is it enables the individual to cope with the daily challenges before they significantly disrupt his or her daily routine. Additionally informal helping diminishes the "stigma" attached to seeking professional help, is inexpensive, can result in a mutual exchange of benefits for both helper



and help seeker, and, most importantly, is a resource naturally available to the help seeker in his/her setting.

Formal conceptualizations are available which serve to further define the functional aspects of informal support. Caplan (1973) suggests that support can entail three major functions: 1) helping the individual to mobilize his or her own psychological resources to cope with a problem situation; 2) helping the individual directly by completing part of the task; and 3) providing the individual with the tools, skills, materials, and cognitive guidance necessary to improve his or her ability to deal with the challenge. For the sake of simplicity in the present discussion, a distinction proposed by Craven and Wellman (1973) will be used. Caplan's first support function will be referred to as emotional support while his second and third functions will be combined under the term instrumental support.

### Research on Sources of Support

Thus far the argument favoring the informal support process as a focal point for preventive interventions has been an intuitive one. Those who favor further development of professional direct care services have suggested the existence of increasing social anomie caused by the rapid technological development and high mobility in Western cultures. This has led many people who would have once received support from extended families and stable friendship groups to depend

on institutional services for support. Representative research from a variety of perspectives, however, has emphasized the crucial nature of the informal support exchange.

In their national survey of help seeking, Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960) noted that only a little more than half of those who recognized a need for help sought out any form of professional service. Demographic comparisons indicated that positive coping responses were more likely to occur in the younger, better educated, and more financially secure populations. Overall results indicated that over fifty per cent of the people made no active response (self-help or help-seeking) when they experienced difficulties. Of the one-third who actively sought help, the majority consulted informal sources of support, while less than five per cent consulted mental health professionals.

A few research examples of such informal helping do exist. In an investigation of healthy and unhealthy outcomes following a premature birth, Caplan (1960) found that parents in the healthy outcome situation were able to seek help from a variety of sources, particularly family, friends, and relatives. Parents in the unhealthy outcome situation were less able to seek or accept help from others because caregiving was limited by physical distance and psychological conflict. Caplan's results indicated that those who were successful in seeking help from one group of informal contacts were likely to be successful in gaining help from other groups as well.

Croog, Lipson, and Levine (1972) found that men convalescing from their first heart attack used informal sources of support far more than formal sources of support. It should be noted that respondents were not distinguished from each other by their unique individual experiences of their heart attacks, only by them being the first major illness. In addition all respondents were under the care of a physician so help seeking was only necessary for instrumental and emotional needs other than needs for direct medical care. Of the total sample of 293 men, 72% made no contact with any formal helping service while reports of helping contacts with informal sources (family, friends, neighbors) ranged from 51% to 84% of the sample. Of the 28% who sought formal sources only 13% used more than one source. Only 6% of the total sample sought out formal sources for emotional support (clergy and psychiatrists) while 12% looked to formal sources for instrumental support (unemployment, welfare and cardiac rehabilitation). Demographic variables were not a factor in the selection and evaluation of informal support sources. Family, friends, and neighbors were all highly ranked in their provision of emotional support, while neighbors and family ranked highest in the provision of instrumental support. Similar to Caplan's (1960) results, support from one informal source was strongly associated with support from others.

There is also evidence that support remains an important



function of family and friendship even in a mobile society. Citing interview data from both Hungary and the United States, Litwak and Szelenyi (1969) found that family, friendship, and neighbor ties were survived despite frequent breaks in contact. Distant ties were maintained by rapid communications and neighboring patterns continued to be established despite frequent turnovers. Informal support remained a significant component of all of these contacts. Similarly in a probability sampling study carried out in a large Toronto borough, Wellman et al. (1971) found that the majority of their respondents reported informal support was available. Of the 845 adults interviewed, 60.3% reported informal support was available for "everyday" issues while 81.3% reported informal support was available for emergency situations. Available support was not related to social or demographic characteristics, but it was strongly associated with the quality of the relationship that existed between the help seekers and their intimates (i.e., family, friends, and neighbors).

Other research examples will be included in the next chapter, but these studies illustrate that informal support can provide an important coping resource. Since this research begins to provide us with important insights into the specifics of the informal support process, it would seem expedient to develop preventive interventions designed to reinforce and foster the informal support systems of a given com-

community. Informal helpers are a known, but relatively little studied, aspect of the informal helping process. I believe they represent a promising link between informal support systems and preventive interventions. The next chapter draws on an interactional or ecological perspective for studying the informal helping role. Since this perspective has been explicitly developed by some as a basis for social intervention, it offers a promising analytical tool for studying and supporting the role of informal helpers.

## C H A P T E R   I I

## INFORMAL HELPING AS A ROLE: AN INTERACTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Thus far informal helping has been discussed as a common exchange that might occur among any set of relatives, friends or neighbors. The present study, however, is not concerned with the incidence of helping behavior in the general population. Instead the focus is with certain individuals who engage in frequent and regular patterns of helping behavior. It is this role and the person who performs it that is referred to here as an informal helper. The present study explores the origins and nature of the helping activity of these informal helpers. The present chapter introduces a framework, labeled an interactional perspective, as a preferred orientation for developing a comprehensive understanding of the origins and process of the helping activity as a basis for social intervention. Following a statement of this perspective, a review of the existing research on both informal helpers and on informal helping as it occurs in the general population will be presented.

The Interactional Perspective

The interactional perspective, as presented here, refers to a conceptualization of behavior as a function of both personal and environmental (social and physical) factors in dynamic interaction over time. While various viewpoints within

psychology represent this perspective, or key aspects of it, two recent statements by Kahn et al. (1964) in organizational psychology and Kelly (1968) in community psychology are perhaps the most comprehensive.<sup>1</sup> Designing interventions for complex behaviors in natural settings is a primary focus in both viewpoints.

The importance of Kahn and his associates' work for the present study lies in their focus on roles, rather than isolated behavior, and their view of role performance as a function of complex, interacting forces over time. The construct of role has long been used as a linking concept between individual and social systems levels of analysis (Semelsoer & Semelsoer, 1963). Extending this concept to the study of stress in formal organizations, Kahn et al. proposed that role performance be viewed as a function of a continuous interaction of personal, interpersonal, and organizational factors across time. They demonstrated that stress is a function of conflict or ambiguity among the various sources of expectation or demand for performance. Although this theory was developed with a formal organizational framework, I am suggesting that the regular patterns of helping of informal helpers can also be viewed as a role, and that this role can be under-

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<sup>1</sup>Reviews by Pugh (1966) and Lichtman and Hunt (1971) of the organizational literature and Weinstein and Frankel (1974) in the community literature support the contention that Kahn and Kelly provide the most comprehensive statement of the interactional perspective in their respective fields.



stood as a function of the continuous interaction between the helper and his or her environment.

Kelly's (1966) conceptualization of an ecological psychology extends the interactional perspective to behaviors beyond those which occur strictly within an organizational setting. Kelly based his thinking on field biology which suggests that all living things exist in an interdependence with their environment. Translated into psychological terms, Kelly suggests that behavior is a function of an integrated simultaneous influence of personal variables, interpersonal variables, and variables deriving from the normative and physical aspects of the environmental setting. The advantage of the interactional perspective is it is both comprehensive and dynamic. Behavior is not viewed simply as a function of a unitary construct but rather as a function of the full range of internal and external experiences of the person as they develop throughout life.

In a given instance, however, a single variable may be most influential because of recency or magnitude of impact. In the present study, for some informal helpers, personal variables might be an overriding determinant of this behavior. For others situational variables might be most important. The advantage of the interactional perspective is its comprehensive nature which reduces the probability that important influential variables will be overlooked.

In developing their respective interactional views,

both Kelly and Kahn sought, in part, to provide a basis for effective and comprehensive interventions. The present study has a similar long range goal. Helpers' activities are presented in terms of an informal helping role. The origins and process of this role are explained as a function of both personal and environmental variables.

### Research on Informal Helpers

It is surprising to discover that informal helpers have not been studied systematically since they are an obvious and valuable component of community support systems. The existing literature is quite limited and what work is available makes little attempt to develop an integrative approach. The only general typology of informal helpers has been proposed by Caplan (1973). He suggests that informal helpers are of two types: generalists and specialists. He considers generalists to be those helpers who are able to provide assistance to people in a wide variety of situations and who appear to have a broad knowledge and wisdom concerning human affairs and community resources. He views specialists as having successfully undergone a specific life challenge which allows them to help others do the same. Noting the limitations of such general categories, Caplan suggests that we will not understand the informal helping process until "in-depth" studies of helpers and their activities are carried out.

No systematic studies have attempted to integrate the

personal, interpersonal, and setting correlates of the role of informal helpers. Some writers have commented on the apparent presence of informal helpers in a particular social setting or community. In observing social patterns in New York City welfare hotels Shapiro (1971) noted that certain individuals would take on various types of helping roles, such as cooking for others, caring for the sick, and generally offering emotional support. These people were usually women who often appeared to be taking a "mother" role for their "families." In a study of suburban Levittown, Gans (1967) indicated that helpers who organized groups to bring people together most often had special interests when they move in, or had received assurance from others that a given group was needed and would be supported. Such studies offer some insight into the way personal, interpersonal, and setting influences interact to shape the informal helping role, but, because of their broad focus, they lack the detail necessary to develop a specific understanding of helpers and their roles.

A small number of other studies have focused more directly on the activities of helpers. However, because they have been restricted to a particular event or type of helping situation, such as lay consultation to psychiatric patients (Lieberman, 1965), aiding Jews to escape Nazi Germany (London, 1970), civil rights activism (Rosenhan, 1970), and widows counseling widows (Silverman, 1969, 1970), their findings are



limited. In Silverman's study, limited interest and activity in their own homes led widows to take on salaried jobs in community work. Through these positions they came in contact with and joined Silverman's volunteer widow to widow counseling program. In the context of the program these widows contacted recent widows, provided emotional support and directed them to services that would be useful. Aside from this brief role description, Silverman provides little insight into the development of these women as helpers.

On the other hand, Liberman (1965) provides a fairly extensive profile of his influentials--community members in Baltimore identified as being instrumental in referring individuals to a psychiatric hospital. He noted that influentials tended to be non-protestant, to have had a prior experience with a mentally ill person in their own family, and to be older, of a higher socioeconomic class and more residentially stable than those they influenced to go for help. There were strong in-group influences for males, Jews, Catholics, and upper and lower socioeconomic classes. Major limitations of Liberman's study were influentials were contacted only by telephone, there was no exploration of the interpersonal dynamics between the influential and influencees, and there was no knowledge of how the influential may have helped, other than to suggest referral to a psychiatric hospital.

London's (1970) and Rosenhan's (1970) studies stand apart due to the extreme degree of threat faced by the helper.

Based on extensive retrospective interviews, London noted that Christians who aided Jews in their escape from Nazi Germany tended to have a strong sense of adventure in their personal lives, a strong identification with a moral parent, and a sense of being socially marginal in relation to the broader society. In his study of civil rights activists, Rosenhan (1970) found that those committed to long-term involvements (as opposed to periodic or occasional involvement) tended to have: 1) a long and continuous positive relationship with at least one parent; 2) socialization not only to ethical values but also to action; 3) less verbal assertion of their social concern and self-importance; and 4) less experience in psychotherapy. While these studies approach an interactional model, similar dimensions would not necessarily be found in persons helping routinely in their natural settings.

One study that has specifically investigated the activities of non-specialized informal helpers in a daily situation is Dana, Heyen, and Burdett's (1974) survey of college student helping and support patterns. Comparisons were made between specific students nominated as peer helpers and randomly selected students who were able to recall a helping incident. It was discovered that both groups dealt with equal numbers of problems concerning heterosexual, family, drug, suicide, and miscellaneous crises. Identified helpers saw more crises related to pregnancy, abortion, violence,

alcohol, and death, while randomly selected helpers saw more problems dealing with college living and academic difficulties. Additionally, identified helpers responded with direct action in significantly more of their helping interactions than did random helpers. While providing some interesting insights into the activities of informal helpers, more complete information is needed before a sense of their role can be developed.

In their discussion Dana et al. suggest that identified helpers could be described as having more understanding, empathy, positive regard, and openness. Unfortunately these comments concerning helper characteristics, while making good intuitive sense, were not substantiated with any detailed findings relating to the personalities of the helpers. In addition most of the interviewing was quite brief and was conducted solely by telephone. The absence of detailed reporting of personal and social setting variables influencing the helpers permits only limited speculation as to how these variables might contribute to the development of the helper role.

While the above studies do touch on some of the personal, interpersonal, and setting correlates of the informal helping role, none of them attempts a complete description. More importantly, none of the studies was developed from a completely interactional framework. Consequently the nature of the interactional correlates of the informal helping role

remains largely unanswered. Given this dearth of information, the literature on general informal helping behavior was examined to determine if some correlates of the general process might also be applied to the informal helper.

### Research on Informal Helping Behavior

Helping as an aspect of human behavior has been the subject of observation and comment since the inception of organized philosophies and religions. In their comprehensive reviews of the social science research on the topic, both Krebbs (1970) and Todd (1971) illustrate how investigators have moved from concentrating on theories of a single internalized motivational construct such as altruism to examining the cause and effect relationships between observable behavior. Krebbs explains that, for traditional personality theorists, helping behavior has been an issue of philosophical debate rather than observable fact. He also notes that behaviorist theories cannot explain the development of a behavior that has no obvious reinforcement value without postulating the existence of a mediating construct. Thus, approaches which view helping in terms of social behavior, thereby sidestepping the question of internalized motivational factors in favor of operational social antecedents, have been the most prolific source of research. Since the attempt to establish social correlates of helping behavior most closely approximates the interactional approach proposed here, it was hoped



that a review of this research would provide some direction in studying informal helpers. However, as the following brief overview illustrates, research on informal helping behavior suffers many of the same limitations found in the work that focused directly on informal helpers.

Following Krebbs' and Todd's distinctions, the literature can be evaluated by four basic categories: 1) trait research, which attempts to relate personal characteristics and willingness to help; 2) situational state research, which attempts to correlate helping behavior with a person's immediate cognitive and emotional state; 3) social systems research which examines helping behavior as a function of the individual's subculture or social setting; and 4) interactional research which looks at relationships between the personal, interpersonal, and setting correlates of helping behavior.

Trait research. This approach has most often used paper and pencil measures to define traits that are "typical" of helping individuals. Such work has been largely uninformative because, as Krebbs (1970) noted, design differences produce an inconsistency of results. More importantly, as Todd (1971) points out, trait theorists ignore both population and setting differences which could affect their results.

Situational state research. The term situational state includes those studies which have investigated the relationship of positive and negative affective states on helping and those studies which have focused on the influence of social

models. Studies of affective states have attempted to correlate the helping response with induced feelings of success, failure, or responsibility for personal harm through the use of laboratory manipulations. Although positive correlations were generally noted between helping and the success and responsibility conditions and negative correlations in the failure conditions, such studies are limited because they do not consider affective states in the context of the general natural environment.

Modeling studies are also limited in their contribution to defining the correlates of helping. Krebbs (1970) indicated that positive results were obtained when the model emphasized the salience and appropriateness of helping, but that positive consequences for the model did not increase observer helping. Negative consequences for the model did, however, reduce observer helping. While they offer some understanding of interpersonal influences, the modeling studies add little to the interactional perspective, since they tried to control interaction through highly controlled procedures rather than accounting for it. The implications of these studies' results are limited when applied to the subjects' daily lives.

Social systems research. Studies that have taken a systemic approach have investigated helping in terms of community or cultural influences. Such studies have varied widely in their scope. Feldman (1968), for example, suggested that helping responses to citizens and foreigners differed in

cities in the United States as opposed to Greek cities because of differing cultural norms governing responses to in-group and outgroup members. In a study of Italian families in Boston, Gans (1960) noted that community members sought out professional help for technical and medical problems, but that they consistently turned to families for financial, emotional, and psychological support. Varying peer helping patterns were observed by Todd (1971, in press) in his analysis of the social environment of a high school. Two male peer subcultures were studied: the citizens, who were oriented towards academic and formal school policy, and the tribe, who were not academically oriented and whose interests often ran counter to formal school culture. Both citizen and tribe members were active in providing peer support within their own group, but the citizens engaged in proportionately more school-related helping, while tribe helping was predominantly unrelated to progress in the formal structure. While these studies are valuable to the extent they illustrate the importance of the context of the social system in determining helping behavior, they obscure the influence of the interaction that exists between the individual and the system.

Recently some investigators have used the social network construct to examine the relationship between the individual, the social system, and patterns of helping behavior. The concept of social network originated within anthropological



research (Barnes, 1972; Mitchell, 1971a; Wolf, 1970). It consists of examining all of a person's known interpersonal contacts and the nature of their relationships both with the focus person and with each other. Social network analysis extends beyond more conventional small group or sociometric procedures in that it includes all contacts including those that are not face to face and those that are purely instrumental in nature.

The social network approach alters the systems approach to helping by allowing the investigator to work within the framework of the person's personal community rather than relying on less discriminating reference points such as geographic position or community. One of the first studies to introduce social network analysis in a western urban setting was Bott's (1971) investigation of social networks and conjugal roles in London families. Bott's findings indicated that partners who grew up and remained in the same neighborhood tended to retain closeknit individual social networks. Individuals who were mobile tended to have looseknit social networks, with few members being acquainted with each other. Bott was most interested in the relationship between network structure and the performance of marital roles. However, an important finding in light of the present discussion was partners with closeknit networks frequently turned to network members for support while couples with looseknit networks tended to rely more on each other.

In focusing on this issue more directly McKinlay (1973) made comparisons of the networks of utilizers and underutilizers of prenatal clinics in Scotland. McKinlay found that underutilizers had large interlocking networks, where most of the network members knew each other. Utilizers had more radical networks where a relatively small number of their network members knew each other. McKinlay suggested that underutilizers who were situated in interlocking networks which were internally consistent and closed to outside influences tended to turn inward for advice and help seeking. Utilizers with more limited access to lay consultants in the form of network members were more likely to seek assistance outside of their networks.

In a comprehensive body of research on urban social networks and informal support in Toronto, Wellman et al. (1971) and Craven and Wellman (1973) were able to determine that informal support on issues of everyday stress was seen as available for a majority of their respondents while nearly all respondents reported the availability of informal emergency support. Quality of interpersonal relationships was shown to be a primary indicator of the availability of informal support, while demographic variables did not discriminate respondents on this dimension. A key outcome of the network analysis was ". . .most informal support comes from those intimates who live beyond the borders of ego's neighborhood" (p. 25). This implies that informal support is most clearly

understood by a person's network of interpersonal relationships rather than more traditional geographic definitions of community.

A critical aspect of the social network approach is the structure of the interpersonal network, and not just the separate relationships, affects behavior. Several structural dimensions of social networks have been developed, but the most important for the present discussion is the construct of density. Density is the percentage of actual interpersonal contacts or links in a person's social network compared to the total possible number of links (Mitchell, 1971b). Craven and Wellman (1973) drawing on their own work and other studies of support in urban social networks suggest that the density of a person's social network influences the nature of the available support.

Dense networks, where there are many interconnections between network members, tend to provide more nurturant or emotional support to the focal person. Less dense or "loose-knit" networks where relatively few persons are in contact with each other are likely to provide a higher proportion of instrumental support. Craven and Wellman illustrate this last point by suggesting that in a search for goods or services it is best to have looseknit networks which would offer several contact points into the community. The analysis of network structure suggests social networks as one of the more promising systems-oriented approaches in the investigation of

support and helping behavior, because it views the social network as a system or natural ecology in which the person functions.

While social systems approaches have contributed much to the understanding of general environmental and interpersonal influences, they have usually failed to consider how these dimensions interact with individual personal variables. A small number of studies have made partial attempts at examining helping behavior from the individual perspective as a function of environment. Although they have some major limitations, these studies most closely approximate an interactional perspective.

Interactional research. Studies which have examined the person-environment interaction have most often focused on the issues of friendship, social role, and demographic characteristics. Findings summarized by Krebbs (1970) suggest that children tend to be more generous to distant acquaintances than to close friends. A tentative conclusion was children use generosity as an expedient method of building relationships. In a study of student groups, Sawyer (1966), using paper and pencil techniques, found that YMCA students were most willing to help others, business students were most likely to help themselves, and that social science students were most likely to help those who could reciprocate. The most important of Sawyer's conclusions is his suggestion that helping can vary as a function of recipient, type of assistance



required, and situation. Although somewhat limited in scope, these findings illustrate the importance of interpreting behavior in terms of an interaction between the person and his or her enduring social environment.

The studies that most closely approximated the interactional framework are those of London (1970) and Rosenhan (1970), previously noted in the overview of the literature on informal helpers. Their results indicated that specific interactions of personal, developmental, and to some extent situational variables, were characteristic of the helpers in their studies. Because they were looking at extreme cases of helping--civil rights activism and helping Jews escape Nazi Germany--one can only speculate applications of their results to more routine helping situations. In particular the extreme nature of the helping situation leads to little understanding of the interpersonal correlates of more routine day-to-day helping.

### Implications for an Interactional Perspective

Several of the individual studies included in the general research on informal helping have investigated some aspects of the interactional perspective and have suggested some possible correlates of the informal helping role. Still there have been only limited attempts to assess the correlates of helping from an integrated interactional framework. Work on social models, friendship, and social networks have



all suggested the importance of interpersonal correlates. Studies which attempted to isolate personal characteristics met with little success, while those studies which investigated personal factors in terms of their broader social context showed much more promise. The social systems research emphasized the influence of the social setting on a behavior as complex as informal helping. The social network approaches in particular illustrated the value of considering the "system" in terms of the structure of the individual's interpersonal environment as opposed to limiting one's focus to a physical setting or geographic community. This while providing some leads and suggestions, the range of experimental designs, subject populations, and helping events that were reported make it difficult to develop an integrated understanding of the correlates of the role of informal helpers. The goal of the present study is to develop a basis for building such an understanding.

Because the existing research has provided few guidelines, the present work was designed to be both exploratory and descriptive. The purpose was not to verify previous findings, but rather to apply an integrated interactional approach to the analysis of the various correlates of the role of informal helpers. Working from the perspective of the individual informal helper, the present study examines the interaction of personal, interpersonal, and setting variables as they affect the development of the informal helping

role. Instead of a single type of helping event, the present study includes a wide range of helping interactions that developed in the day-to-day existence of the helpers in their natural setting. The final introductory chapter outlines these correlates in terms of the specific dimensions and goals of this study.

## C H A P T E R    I I I

## DIMENSIONS AND GOALS

The present research uses a case study approach. Although the individual findings provide an important level of analysis in their own right, it is their ability to illustrate the developmental and process dynamics of the informal helping role which is most important. The frame of reference that has been proposed to systematically understand helpers and their roles is an examination of the interrelationships between the helper and a range of environmental factors across time. One of the more comprehensive means of examining these interrelationships is observing the interactions of three major spheres of influence: personal, interpersonal and setting correlates. This chapter describes how these major correlates are represented in the specific dimensions of the present study and presents the goals of the study as determined by these specific dimensions.

Dimensions of the Study

In the present study the interaction of personal and environmental variables that influence the helping role are considered to constitute the context of the role. An important aspect of this role context is its representation of a continuity of process across time. Thus it was important to consider the major correlates of the role, in terms of both a

developmental context and the current context.

In the present study the helpers are university students. The developmental context is represented by a self-report of their personal history including their personal development, their interpersonal relationships, and the major social settings that they experienced. The current context of their role is represented by their present personal constructs, determined from their self reports, their present interpersonal relationships as represented by their social networks, and their present environment as represented by their residence hall setting.

Developmental context. The detailed reporting by the respondents of their personal development, past interpersonal relationships, and the major settings and incidents they have experienced is necessary to determine the importance of prior influences on the helper's current role.

Current content. The setting of the present study is a large university residence hall system which was selected because it is a relatively closed system and therefore provides a reasonably stable and constant environment in terms of both physical structure and homogenous nature of the population. With setting a constant or control factor in the present study, the range of setting influences on the helper role was more limited than if a variety of settings had been used.

There is an obvious interrelationship between the choice of population and setting, but the decision to investigate

college student informal helpers was also influenced by a number of studies that indicated peers were a significant source of influence during the college years (Newcomb & Wilson, 1966; Boggs, 1973; Appel, Berry, & Hoffman, 1973). In addition, Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960) reported that those most likely to engage actively in problem solving were the young and educated and Dana, Heynen, and Burdett (1973) found evidence of the existence of an informal helping role in certain students. All suggested that college students would be an optimal population with which to begin a descriptive and exploratory study.

The interpersonal correlates were assessed by examining the nature of the respondents' social networks. The advantages of network analysis have been discussed elsewhere. Using networks as a method of interpersonal analysis provides for a systematic view of the structure of the social environment. The inclusiveness of this approach provides access to the helpers' complete "personal community" rather than restricting the focus to a single group or setting.

### Goals of the Study

It has been argued that increased understanding of informal support patterns is an important key to improved preventive interventions and that informal helpers could form an integral link to a community's informal support system. Accordingly, it is believed that the coping resources of a



given community could be significantly improved if the role of its informal helpers were understood and reinforced. An orientation has developed from work in both organizational and community psychology. It suggested that an effective means for designing interventions that focus on complex behavior such as informal helping is examining the behavior as a function of the interaction of personal and environmental variables. A review of the existing literature on both informal helpers and the informal helping process from an interactional perspective revealed that few consistent correlates of the informal helping role have been established. There has been only a limited discussion as to the interaction of these correlates. It was believed that if this limited understanding of the major influences of the helping role and their interaction could be developed and refined this would provide an important step towards designing future interventions with informal helpers.

Thus the primary goals of the present study were to: 1) develop an understanding of the activities of informal helpers in terms of role behavior and to define the key descriptive dimensions of this helping role; 2) to examine and define the context of this informal helping role, where context is defined by personal, interpersonal, and setting variables both past and present; and 3) to the extent possible to examine the interaction of these various contextual correlates and the implications of their interactions for the helping

role. Having done this, a generative base from which to develop further interactional conceptualizations of informal helpers and their roles both in terms of research and preventive intervention could be developed.

The specialized nature of the personal and setting dimensions in the present study places some obvious limits on the breadth of application of the present results. It should be clearly understood, however, that the present study makes no claim that the helping role presented is a representative model of an informal helping role. The purpose of the present study is to demonstrate that a given helping role can be defined by its specific dimensions, and that the context of this role can be understood in terms of an interaction of personal and environmental variables. A similar process of investigation could then be applied to other helping roles in other settings to provide a comprehensive basis for designing interventions. Some of the specific role and context dimensions observed in the present study may be substantiated by future comparative studies, but the present study can only suggest and not confirm that such standard role and context dimensions exist.

## C H A P T E R    I V

## METHOD

The basic goal of the present study was to understand a complex portion of human activity that occurs spontaneously in a natural setting. A naturalistic-qualitative approach was the method adopted. The scope and nature of the questions that developed from the assumptions of an ecological-interactionist model, and the lack of substantial prior findings relating to these questions which might have formed the basis for more controlled empirical procedures led to the selection of the naturalistic approach. It derives most directly from the assumption that complex behavior is the result of a continuous interaction of variables that are best understood in their natural context.

The choice of a qualitative approach was determined by the complexity of issues and the lack of previously verified guidelines. It was necessary to consider the influence of several variables, but there was no certainty as to what their relative influence might be in any given situation. The range and adaptability available in the qualitative approach make it well suited for an exploration of these issues.

Within the qualitative framework a case study approach was adopted since this method would provide the depth of individual understanding necessary to interpret the relative

importance of the several correlates for a given helper. Self-reports of the helpers were chosen as an appropriate starting point.<sup>2</sup> Given appropriate controls in procedure it was felt that respondent-based information would form the most accurate and reliable basis for an exploratory and generative study.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that reliance on self-report data limits judgments about the effectiveness of the respondents as informal helpers. Although the selection and interview procedures detailed below made possible some observations on this issue, the goal of this study was not to prove the effectiveness of these helpers. Its purpose was to understand the nature of their role and its context.

The specific instruments and procedures utilized in this in-depth study of informal helpers and their role are presented below in two stages. Stage one details the selection process that was used to determine the final respondent group

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<sup>2</sup>The spirit of the present investigation is perhaps best exemplified by Lofland's (1971) observation:

. . .the qualitative study of people in situ is a process of discovery. It is not of necessity a process of learning what is happening. Since a major part of what is happening is provided by people in their own terms one must find out about those terms rather than impose upon them a preconceived or outsiders scheme of what they are about.

<sup>3</sup>Dean and Whyte (1969) suggest several ways of controlling self-report data, e.g., repeated interviews with the same individual, knowledge of the setting, checks from other data sources, and interviewer skills. They emphasize that objective truth is less important than "what the informant's statements reveal about his (or her) feelings and perspectives, and what inferences can be made from them. . ." (p. 114).



of thirteen informal helpers. Stage two describes the in-depth interview process that was carried out with the respondent sample.

### Selection of Respondents

The selection process was designed to identify a group of students who were active as informal helpers in their setting. The goal was not to obtain a sample that would be representative of all informal helpers that may have existed in the setting. Rather the respondent group was selected to be large enough and reasonably diverse so that it would imply the range of the informal helpers who were active in the setting. To avoid an idiosyncratic sample, some attention was given to insure the respondent group would include both men and women, and people with varying life styles, goals, and interests. Again generalizability was not the aim since this was an in-depth study of the development of a complex set of role behaviors in a specific set of individuals. Thus the respondent group was illustrative, not strictly representative. The thirteen respondents in the present study were all university undergraduate students living in one of two low-rise residence halls situated in a large university residence hall complex. The general characteristics of these respondents will be detailed below following a description of the selection process.



## Setting

Two residence halls were involved: a large low-rise co-educational residence hall housing 330 students and a small low-rise women's residence hall housing 180 students.<sup>4</sup> The residence halls were part of a complex housing over 5,600 undergraduate and graduate students. This setting was selected because the writer had established good staff contacts in these residence halls during a previous year when he had held an administrative position in the general residential complex. Both target residence halls had their own student government, own student counselor group and own professional staff administrator who resided in an apartment located in each building.

## Peer Nomination Process

While the selection of the respondent helpers did not follow strict sampling procedures, the selection process did involve several checks to insure that the respondents were active as informal helpers. Key informants, or even self-nominations, might have been used to identify the respondents. Instead a process of peer nomination followed by a series of screening procedures was used. Peers seemed best able to judge whether or not a certain person had been help-

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<sup>4</sup>Plans to include two high-rise residence halls containing a mixture of men's, women's and coeducational dormitories were discontinued due to insufficient returns on the initial survey.

ful to them. The selection process involved four major steps: 1) peer nomination through the use of the Helper Nomination Survey, 2) telephone interviews with all of the nominators, 3) telephone interviews with all of the nominees, and 4) in-person interviews with a smaller group of nominees selected on the basis of responses obtained in steps two and three.

Helper nomination. Permission to distribute forms and make personal contacts with students was obtained from the director of the residential complex involved, the residence hall staff responsible for the selected residence halls, and the student counselors in both residence halls. Counselors distributed the Helper Nomination Survey to each room on their corridor. Participation on the part of some of the counselors was optional. Since some felt they could not distribute forms for ethical reasons, extra forms were left in the staff members' apartments for those students who were interested in the study. The Helper Nomination Survey included a description of an informal helper, spaces for nominations (including name, address, and relationship to the nominator) and a brief statement concerning the procedures and purposes of the study (see Appendix A). Nominators were encouraged to nominate persons (including themselves) whom they perceived as being an informal helper or somewhat like an informal helper. No limit was placed on the number of nominations one person could make.

There were 43 useable nomination forms returned from the coeducational dormitory and 46 useable forms returned from the women's dormitory yielding a total of 89 useable forms. Eleven forms were invalid because they lacked sufficient identifying information. The total number of nominees listed was 225.

While the nomination process did produce a range of nominees, it was not assumed that these nominees were a representative sample of the total potential population. Of the total number of nominees, 127 were listed as living in the same residence hall as the nominators, 38 lived in the local university community, and 80 lived at a distance of 30 miles or more from the university. The largest single category of nominations was friends ( $N = 155$ ). Floor counselors were second ( $N = 31$ ). The remainder of the nominations were distributed among immediate family members, relatives, university staff and faculty members, clergy, and high school teachers. There were also 98 nominations in the "somewhat like a helper" category, but these nominations were not considered in the selection process.

Since the intent was to focus on the specific target settings, only the 127 nominations of individuals living in the two residence halls were considered. After controlling for duplicate nominations the total number of individual nominees was 83. A series of screening procedures described below were used to reduce this total to the final respondent

sample of thirteen informal helpers.

Nominator screening. Nominators were contacted and the Nominator Telephone Screening Interview was conducted.<sup>5</sup> Permission was given to use the nominator's name when contacting the nominee. Nominators gave a brief description of the extent and nature of the nominee's helping role, and they were asked for any additional comments or questions concerning the study (see Appendix B). Notes outlining the nominator's comments were taken during the conversation. Since the goal was to obtain helpers who were generally helpful to a variety of people, a nomination was considered strong if the nominator indicated that the nominee helped frequently with a variety of people and described the nominee's role as having depth and range. Sample comments that were considered positive included: "[she] is outgoing and easy to talk to. . .," "[she] goes out of her way to help others not normally helped. . .," "[she] is helpful to several people. . .," "[he] will do anything you ask. . .," "[he] helps people all over the dorm." Nominations were considered weak if the nominator described the nominee as being helpful only to him/herself, or the helping occurred in a single instrumental dimension (e.g., academic tutoring). Sixteen nominees were eliminated because

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<sup>5</sup>Of the final thirteen respondents one received five nominations, two received four, four received three, three received two, and five received one nomination. Only four of the respondents included one or more of their nominators in their current network of primary relationships.



of single self nominations, nominations by roommates, non-serious nominations, or inability to contact the nominator.

Nominee screening. The remaining 67 nominees were then contacted, regardless of the strength of their nominator's statement, and the nominee Telephone Screening Interview was conducted. Nominees were asked to give their reactions to the nomination, a brief description of their helping activities, the extent of their self-identification as helpers, and their willingness to participate in further interviews (see Appendix C). Nominees were considered to be strong potential respondents if they communicated a definite self awareness of themselves as helpers, and indicated that they helped a variety of people in a range of situations.<sup>6</sup> Nominees were considered weak as potential respondents if they could give no clear reason for their nomination, they only saw themselves as helping one or two close friends, or if they could only think of minor favors they had done for others. Written notes were made of these conversations while they were in progress. It is possible that some people were falsely considered weak candidates because of an inability or unwillingness to give an articulate description of their helping activities. The great majority of the nominees contacted, however, were able to make these self-assessments with little or no hesitation. All persons were given the

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<sup>6</sup>Care was taken so as to avoid suggesting appropriate answers to the respondents.



opportunity to ask any questions they might have about the study, and all were thanked for their cooperation and told that they might be contacted for another interview at some time in the future.

Evaluation of nominator and nominee interviews. When all the nominator and nominee interviews were completed, notes from both interviews for each of the 67 remaining nominees were compared. After comparing the notes from both sets of interviews a group of thirty nominees was selected which appeared to have the clearest evidence of being active informal helpers. This was based on both the nominee and their nominators stating that the nominee helped in several ways with a variety of people. Again, this was not an attempt to arrive at a statistically pure representative sample. The object was to obtain a fairly large pool of seemingly diverse informal helpers that were identified by persons living in the setting. Thus there was nothing absolute about the figure of 30 nominees being selected from the larger pool of 67. It was felt 30 would prove to be a manageable number of respondents to screen by in-person interviews to determine the final respondent sample. Judgment was made on the basis of interview notes. Not all of the 30 nominees who were included were equal in the strength of their nominations--some had more depth and range to their roles than others. However, both their self-descriptions and their nominee statements suggested they were sufficiently

active as informal helpers to include them for further investigation.

All 30 members of the nominee pool that remained following this screening process were sent letters asking for an in-person interview. The letter reminded them of the previous telephone interview, provided a brief description of the interview to be conducted, guaranteed their anonymity, and notified them that they would be contacted shortly by telephone to arrange a meeting time (see Appendix D). Nominees were then contacted and interview times were arranged. Only one individual declined to cooperate at this point. Thus in-person interviews were conducted with 29 of the 30 members of the respondent pool. Before outlining the final selection process procedure, it will be important to consider some of the characteristics of this respondent pool.

Characteristics of nominee pool. The most significant breakdowns of this respondent pool were as follows: 9 were men and 20 were women; 19 lived in the coed dormitory and 11 lived in the all women's dormitory; 9 held positions as "floor counselors" while 20 held no such positions. The first two distinctions involve a straightforward explanation but the latter requires more explanation. More women appeared in the pool because all of the residents of one setting and half of the second setting were women. It also seemed that women were more likely to be identified as helpers in the present study, but the nature of the survey and selection

process does not allow any definitive statement on this. Second, nearly twice as many of the identified helpers were located in the coeducational residence hall because this residence hall was twice the size of the all women's residence hall.

In the present setting, floor counselors are people who volunteer and are selected by a committee of residence hall staff and their peers to act as a "counselor" for a given floor. They function as liasons between the corridor and residence hall administration and administer to the general administrative and personal needs of corridor residents. Training for their positions occurs in the spring semester prior to the year of service. Training consists of four two-hour workshops with one workshop held each week for four weeks at the end of the semester. Topics which were focused on during training included emergency intervention, attending behavior and counseling skills, race and sex role awareness, nature and location of university resources, and administrative procedures of the university, the residence hall area, and the specific dormitory. Given the range of topics covered and brief time available, training emphasized raising the counselors' consciousness of issues and resources rather than insuring competency in skills.

Despite the brevity of training, the basic definition of an informal helper seems to be violated by the consideration of floor counselors. There were, however, valid reasons for

including them in the study and several checks were used to prevent violating the definition of informal helpers. Earlier it was noted that in the initial survey counselors received 31 nominations, second only to the friends category. Clearly peers considered floor counselors to be informal helpers. As the screening process continued it became apparent that several counselors who had been identified as informal helpers were also some of the stronger candidates in terms of depth and range of their roles. Thus the choice was either to include strong candidates who were also counselors or to include people who were only somewhat like informal helpers but did not hold counselor positions. It was decided to include those informal helpers who were counselors.

Checks were developed to insure these people were active in an informal role beyond what was expected of them in their counselor duties. When their nominators were contacted and when the helper-counselors were contacted, both were asked if they felt the nominee was involved in helping people other than those they were responsible for as counselor and if they had been active in informal helping before becoming counselors. If all these queries yielded strong affirmative answers, the nominee was assumed to meet the criteria for inclusion in the final respondent selection pool.

Although not originally anticipated, it was felt that the inclusion of helpers who held counseling positions might add an important dimension to the present study. The floor



counselor program is a unique model of community intervention based on the identification and reinforcement of naturally occurring informal helpers. Inclusion of members from both groups could provide the potential for some interesting comparisons, although this was not the major objective of the study. A final check was also available in the form of the intensive interviewing procedures to be described. If the reports of the major respondents revealed that the counselor did violate significantly the informal role, the study could be based solely on those respondents who were not floor counselors. Since the goal of the study was not to establish a pure general definition of the helping role, it was hoped the use of floor counselors could illustrate an effective, pragmatic, and comprehensive process for understanding the development and process of a specific helping role.

Helping role interview. One hour, in-person, Helper Role Interviews were conducted with the 29 people in the nominee pool who consented to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in the respondents' residence hall rooms, were based on a semi-structured interview guide, and were tape-recorded. The interview sought a much more detailed account of the depth and range of the nominees' helping roles. Respondents were asked their sense of self as helpers, their reaction to the nomination, their relationship to their nominators, and the dimensions and dynamics of their helping roles. They gave at least two detailed examples of their helping



involvements and a brief report of their life interests and goals (see Appendix E).

This selection process was designed to obtain at least ten respondents who most closely fit the definition of an informal helper and who would be willing and able to cooperate in several more hours of intensive interviewing. It was also intended that this final respondent sample be reasonably diverse, though not specifically representative of the larger respondent pool. Thus these three factors determined the selection of the final respondent sample of fifteen informal helpers. The actual number of fifteen was in part an arbitrary figure. By selecting fifteen respondents, at least ten completed protocols could be obtained. To include more than fifteen would have made the interviewing task unmanageable.

A goodness-of-fit of the nominees with the informal role was determined by their ability to convey a sense of identification with their role and to describe their role as having both depth and range. They also provided two or more detailed recent helping examples as requested. People who appeared to fit the definition less well were unable to provide two complete examples and generally indicated some hesitancy in identifying themselves in the helping role.

In order to meet the goals of diversity in a sample of manageable size, four people were not included in the final sample even though they appeared to be highly active in the

helping role. These four included one woman counselor from each of the two settings, and one female non-counselor from each of the two settings. In addition, because men comprised only a third of the nominee population (9 out of 30), some leniency was shown in their favor in the final sample. Thus two of the men included in the sample seemed less active as informal helpers than two of the four women who were excluded.

An additional crucial aspect to the selection process was time. The study was carried out in the second half of the spring semester. In order to insure completion of the data gathering a decision on the inclusion of the nominee in the final respondent sample had to be made at the end of each individual screening interview. This was necessary so that the remaining interviews could be begun with that person. Consequently some respondents were completing their full set of interviews by the time the final nominees were being screened. This was not a significant problem, however, since the final nominee to be screened was included in the final sample of fifteen. The only potentially strong respondents excluded were the four women mentioned above.

When a respondent was asked to continue, the nature of the remaining interviews was explained and s/he was told a fee of ten dollars would be paid at the completion of the interviews. A verbal agreement was made and a time set for the next interview. In situations where the respondent was not continued, s/he was thanked for the interest and partici-

pation and given the opportunity to ask any questions.

Characteristics of the respondents.<sup>7</sup> Thirteen people from the final respondent sample completed the study. One male non-counselor from the coed dormitory and one female counselor from the women's dormitory completed only the Helping Role Interview due to deaths in their families. Again, this final group of respondents was selected as a range of those nominated and were not considered to be a representative sample of informal helpers or the more general college student population. Eight of this group were women; five, men. Four women were counselors, four did not hold floor counselor positions. Two men were counselors and three were not. There were two women counselors and two women non-counselors from the women's dormitory. Two male counselors and two female counselors lived in the coed residence hall. Three male and two female non-counselors also lived in the coeducational residence hall.

All four class years were represented in the respondent group, with the majority in their junior year. All were caucasian which largely reflected the minimal representation of minority students in the setting. Three minority students at least were included in the original nominee pool of 30. One was eliminated because she was a foreign exchange student

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<sup>7</sup>Respondent characteristics are reported here only in general terms. Individualized descriptions are available in Chapter VI and in Appendices J-R.

and significantly older than the rest of the respondents (age 29). A second minority student, who was a counselor in the all women's dormitory, was eliminated since three counselors had already been selected from that setting. The third minority student was in the final sample but she was one of the two who could not complete the study due to a death in the family.

Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant religions were all represented. Fathers' occupations ranged from equipment repair to corporate executive. Some mothers held jobs, others did not. Home communities varied from suburban to small town.

Respondents' academic majors were either undeclared or tended toward help-related professions--nursing, psychology, teaching, and sociology. Some of the respondents were active in major campus organizations such as sports, music, or theater, but not all. Some were active in volunteer work outside the university setting while others were not. Some supported traditional life styles and values, while others had adopted various "counterculture" life styles. Thus, while the respondents cannot be considered to be a representative sample of a general university population, neither can they be identified as a homogenous group of college students. These individual differences have important implications for the interactional perspective to their informal helping roles.



### Intensive Interviewing

Although the Helping Role Interview was used as a screening device, it was also considered to be a part of the more intensive interview process since it provided a significant amount of information concerning the dimensions of the respondents' informal helping role. Two more detailed interviews were conducted to assess the influence of the respondents' interpersonal relationships on their roles and the respondents' personal history on the development of their helping roles.

### Interpersonal Influence

To assess the extent and nature of the respondents' interpersonal relationships, a three-stage Social Network Interview was conducted.<sup>8</sup> In stage one, or mapping, respondents were asked to draw schematic representations of their interpersonal relationships which depicted the relative closeness of these persons both to the respondent and to each other. In stage two respondents were asked to construct a simple density matrix including all relationships listed. They were then asked to indicate on the matrix which network

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<sup>8</sup>Although a variety of quantitative social network measures have been developed, only two were used in the present study: range (total number of network members) and density (a ratio comparing the actual number of interpersonal contacts or links in a person's network and the total possible number of links) (Mitchel, 1971).

members were acquainted and which were not. (Simplified examples of a social network map and a density matrix including computations are available in Appendix F).<sup>9</sup> In stage three of the Inquiry Interview respondents were asked to describe the individual relationships they had listed. Emphasis was placed on the degree of closeness to the respondent, frequency of interaction, type of interaction, perceived similarity, physical proximity, and extent and nature of the support dynamics in the relationship (see Appendix H).

### Personal Development

To assess the respondents' personal development, their present self-concept, and their reactions to their present setting, a Personal Development Interview was conducted. Questions focused on personal and role development, coping skills, self-concept, and reactions to their setting, the counselor role, and the concept of supportive professional intervention for their helping roles. Any gaps or inconsistencies in previous interviews were clarified (see Appendix I).

### Procedure: Intensive Interviewing Phase

Both the Social Network and Personal Development inter-

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<sup>9</sup>The density scores and network maps were found to add little to the understanding of the respondents' social networks beyond what was determined from the descriptive reports. Thus these results have not been included in the main body of the discussion. A brief account of these results and their relative importance is presented in Appendix G.

views were conducted with the final respondent group of 13 informal helpers. Interviews times were set according to the respondents' scheduling preferences. Four to eight hours were required to complete a full individual protocol. Number of meeting times per respondent ranged from three to six. Appointments were missed only twice with one being the result of a scheduling misunderstanding. Interviewing took place during the final two months of the spring semester.

When the respondents completed their final interviews, they were thanked, paid their ten-dollar fee, and asked for any additional comments or questions. When all interviews were completed, a general feedback session was held in a meeting room of one of the residence halls.

### Analysis

Verbatim, typed transcripts were made of all taped interviews. In addition to the social network maps and density matrices, there were more than 1,000 pages of raw data. The verbatim transcripts were transformed into working summaries of approximately one-half the length of the original transcripts. In developing the summaries, all of the respondent's comments pertaining to a specific topic or question were placed under a single heading. All substantive quotes were included in the summaries in their original form. Extraneous or repetitious material was edited or summarized. The summaries were written in the form of reports on each re-

spondent with a text accompanying the quotes in each section. All transcription and summarization was carried out by the investigator. The organization of these summaries formed the first level of analysis.

Summaries were then reviewed in detail several times using an interactional perspective. Specific attention went to the dimensions of the helping role the respondents described and to the interaction of correlates that led to the development of this role. The final presentation of the data represented a compromise between two extremes. Presenting each case in detail was too cumbersome while summarizing the findings from all 13 respondents under relevant topics resembled a Russian novel more than a research report. The final decision was to present the material in two stages as represented by Chapters V and VI. To avoid undue repetition, "results" and "discussion" were developed simultaneously in the two chapters. Chapter V presents 11 major dimensions of the informal helping role that emerged from a review of the role as presented by all 13 respondents. These dimensions are first described and then the interaction among these major role dimensions are discussed. Chapter VI presents in detail four selected respondent cases to illustrate the developmental and current contextual correlates of the helping role.<sup>10</sup> These are presented first in terms of the interactions of the di-

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<sup>10</sup>Brief profiles of the remaining nine respondents are presented in Appendices J-R.



mensions presented in Chapter V and then in terms of patterns of interaction between the major correlates (personal, interpersonal, and setting).

## C H A P T E R    V

## DIMENSIONS OF THE INFORMAL HELPING ROLE

This descriptive study sought to identify the key dimensions which describe and differentiate informal helping roles. This chapter presents the dimensions observed to be most significant in characterizing the content and dynamics of the roles of the 13 respondent informal helpers. As suggested previously, these dimensions were determined post hoc. In addition to their more direct descriptive value, these dimensions are important as general constructs which could be applied to comparative descriptions of the informal helping roles as it is observed in a variety of settings.

Eleven major dimensions were developed: 1) Frequency, 2) Time Span, 3) Content Area, 4) Magnitude, 5) Degree of Emergency, 6) Nature of Support, 7) Breadth of Skills, 8) Proximity of Help Seeker, 9) Interpersonal (Helper-Helpee) Relationship, 10) Method of Initiation, and 11) Style of Helping. These dimensions will be defined in the following section and then potential interrelationships are discussed.

Description of Dimensions

Frequency. Frequency refers to how often the helper became involved in helping events. The frequency of helping reported ranged from "night and day. . .it's a constant thing," to "about once a week."

Time span. Time span refers to the total time elapsed from initiation to completion of an individual helping involvement. Most reported helping interventions averaged from one to three weeks in duration. In most cases three to four face-to-face contacts were involved. The range of time span, however, was quite broad and ranged from a single contact of little more than an hour to months and even years. These latter situations could more accurately be considered a series of recurring situations with the same help seeker.

Content area. Content area refers to the subject or focal area of the problem situation. The list below provides a sense of the content areas possible, although it is not comprehensive since it is based on examples given by respondents rather than detailed listings from them. The numbers following the major content areas indicate the number of examples in which this content area was given.<sup>11</sup>

- Academic (1)
- Violence (1)
- Drugs (1)
- Death (1)
- Parental Conflict (1)
- Medical (1)
- Interpersonal (roommate, marital, friendship, and dating conflicts) (7)
- Personal (poor self-concept, loneliness, rejection, depression) (11)
- Favors (lending money or goods, providing transportation)

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<sup>11</sup>Totals for "Favors" are not presented. Although each respondent mentioned several such incidents, they were not considered in tabulating major helping examples.

This listing suggests that the helpers were primarily involved in general personal and interpersonal problem situations. However, the nature of the interviewing called for examples that involved a certain amount of detail. Thus respondents were more likely to offer examples that included a considerable amount of interaction around complex personal and interpersonal issues.

Magnitude. Magnitude indicates the size of the helping task required, i.e., academic problems could range from selection of a course to decisions to change an academic major or to leave school altogether. Interpersonal problems ranged from despondency over a weekend date rejection to marital conflicts. While respondents were more frequently involved in issues of lesser magnitude, it was their willingness to become involved in major issues that was a key factor in their role as helpers.

Degree of emergency. Degree of emergency refers to the emergency or crisis nature of the helping involvement. Only four of the helping situations involved an immediate physical threat to the helpee or helper (a beating, suicidal gestures, epileptic reaction to medication). While the helper's response as "helper" must be qualified because of the strong situational cues involved, later discussion will suggest that the competency of the helper's crisis response qualifies degree as a separate role dimension.

Nature of support. Nature of support is the distinct-



tion between instrumental and emotional support presented in Chapter II. Since the selection process favored eclectic support delivery (i.e., helpers providing a single form of instrumental support such as academic tutoring were eliminated), respondents were flexible in supplying both instrumental and emotional support. The important aspects of this dimension is not that helpers were able to supply either instrumental support or emotional support in a given situation, but rather that they were able to supply both forms of support during a single major helping situation.

Breadth of skills. Breadth of skills refers to the specialist-generalist distinction in helping roles suggested by Caplan (1973). Although Caplan used this as a basic bipolar description, the present results suggest the existence of more subtle distinctions in the helpers' role. Again selection procedures favored generalists, but several respondents had specialist aspects in their roles (e.g., skills with drug, medical, or sexual adjustment problems). The present results suggest that the helping role would be more accurately described by a continuum between specialist and generalist skills than by discreet categories.

Proximity of help seeker. Proximity of help seeker is defined by the geographic distance separating the help seeker and the helper. Two-thirds of the examples provided by the respondents involved help seekers living in the same

residence hall, but the rest involved individuals who lived outside of their immediate residential setting. These "long distance" helping relationships ranged from the general vicinity of the university to cities thirty to one hundred miles distant.

Interpersonal (helper-helpee) relationship. The interpersonal relationship dimension describes the interpersonal relationship between helper and help seeker. Respondents gave help to people ranging from close friends to distant acquaintances.

Method of initiation. Initiation refers to how a helping situation began. In the present sample initiation seems to be most accurately defined by an active-passive dimension. Those respondents who opted for a passive initiation tended to wait until they had received a definite request from a help seeker before they became involved. Although they were frequently aware of situations and felt some pressure to respond, they emphasized the importance of "respecting a person's privacy." They felt a person was more likely to discuss a problem if s/he invested him/herself by making the initial contact. Those respondents preferring a combination of active and passive initiation modes also emphasized the need to respect the privacy of the help seeker, but explained one should be alert to potential problems and be willing to pick up on cues as presented.

Since this dimension seems central in defining the help-

ing role, illustrative examples of these initiation modes will be given from three of the cases.<sup>12</sup> Beth, who favored a more passive approach, explained the initiation process in terms of a general attitude she felt she conveyed to others.<sup>13</sup>

People tend to come to me. Sometimes if I notice somebody I go over and offer help, but most of the time it's people that come to me. . . . I care about other people. I think people can sense that and I think that's what brings people to me. . . . If somebody comes to me with a problem, I really care about them. . . . I think that's something that people really pick up on. . . .

Mary, a respondent who favored a combination of passive and active techniques, felt it was important at times to lead potential help seekers into a discussion of their problem:<sup>14</sup>

Usually if something. . . is bothering somebody there will be a light conversation first, then they will mention something and they will take off on that. . . . If somebody had a boyfriend I might say, "Oh, how is he getting along?" That would probably lead to something. . . . I ask about it and if they don't want to talk about it you can tell, so you sort of talk about something more pleasant, and that might cheer them up.

On occasion a few of the respondents engaged in a very direct initiation process. Eva described one such situation:<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>To protect anonymity all proper names used in this study are fictitious.

<sup>13</sup>Case summary presented in Appendix J.

<sup>14</sup>Case summary presented on pages 78-93.

<sup>15</sup>Case summary presented on pages 110-125.

. . .we were doing sensitivity kinds of exercises and one of the girls was very, very upset and she didn't feel comfortable at all. I went over to her immediately. I was just drawn to her. I said you are really uncomfortable. . .she couldn't talk about it and I was speaking her thoughts and it was immediate identification and we ended up being close friends from then on.

A majority of the helpers emphasized the importance of being "available" and "willing to listen," of being nonjudgmental of the views and opinions of the helpees. As these examples illustrate, however, they differed on how direct and spontaneous they would be in initiating situations. These variations are important because they provide a range of situations through which the helpee might receive help. In addition the "negotiations" surrounding the initiation process provide both the helper and helpee with clues to the appropriateness of the helper's general style for the helpee's needs.

Style of helping. Style of helping is an integrative dimension. It represents a combination of many of the above dimensions in the actual dynamics of the helping exchange. Style denotes the helper's actual method of helping. The helpers' styles were indicated by their "philosophies" of helping and their actual techniques of helping. Two basic orientations were observed: a directive and a non-directive approach. Most respondents were non-directive in their style. Those favoring non-directive approaches felt the helpee needed a "safe" noncritical situation to air diffi-



culties. Directive approach respondents assumed the helpee's problems were often based on mistaken perceptions about his or her situation. These helpers believed in challenging the helpee's assumptions and directed them towards realistic thinking.

At certain times all respondents engaged in listening, reflection, empathy, sympathy, encouragement of emotional catharsis, questioning, confrontation, development and clarification of alternative solutions, referral and follow-up. The nondirective helpers tended to emphasize listening and reflection over confrontation and questioning as opposed to the more directive helpers. Non-directive helpers were also less direct in their suggestions of alternative solutions than were the directive helpers.

All of the respondents emphasized the necessity of the helpee to retain the responsibility for his or her own decisions. This is a critical aspect of style since it indicates the respondents' awareness of the need to have the help seeker improve coping skills and not simply solve the problem. This seems to be one of the most crucial functions of the informal helping role.

#### Observed Interrelationships of Dimensions

The preceeding section described several dimensions which seem to characterize the role of the informal helpers in the present study. This section will present some of the

more important interrelationships that were observed between these various dimensions. The primary function is to highlight the nature of the role for which the contextual influences will be presented in the next chapter. While this discussion describes the dimensions and their interrelationships in a specific helping role, a similar analysis could be usefully applied to other helping roles in a variety of settings. Thus, in addition to a specific illustrative description, the present discussion will be a suggested outline for future comparative investigations.

Although each of the dimensions represent an important aspect of the role, some of the interrelationships are more obvious than others. In order to expedite this discussion, the less complex interrelationships will only be noted while discussion will be expanded for those interrelationships which are both more important and complex. The sequence of discussion will proceed from the less to the more complex interrelationships following this general framework: descriptive dimensions (frequency, time span, content area, magnitude, and degree); response dimensions (nature of support and breadth of skills); relationship dimensions (interpersonal relationship, and geographic proximity); and process dimensions (initiation and style of helping).

Descriptive dimensions. The first five dimensions that were presented (frequency, time span, content area, magnitude and degree) describe very basic aspects of the informal

helper's role. Their interrelationships are fairly straightforward and many have already been alluded to. As noted previously helpers as a group were more frequently involved in problems of a lesser magnitude, but in terms of content area most major problems concerned personal or interpersonal situations. Similarly major crisis involvement was a relatively infrequent occurrence.

A somewhat less obvious interrelationship was observed between frequency, time span, and magnitude. Respondents who were most frequently involved (in terms of the total number of helping contacts) appeared to implement more rapid resolutions to situations relative to their magnitude than did those helpers who were less frequently involved. This distinction was clearly along counselor/non-counselor lines where counselors were required to deal with numerous instrumental helping demands in their counseling role in addition to their own informal helping role. Consequently they had less time available to deal with major situations.

Most important of the above interrelationships was the relative frequency with which all of the helpers were involved in major personal and interpersonal problem situations. Their involvement in these more complex situations called for a sophistication of interpersonal skills which was a key aspect of their role.

Response dimensions. The next two dimensions that were presented (nature of support and breadth of skills) refer to

the type and range of helpers' responses. Fairly straightforward was the relationship that, since short-term instrumental favors were the most frequent request, helpers were most frequently involved in providing support.

A somewhat more interesting interrelationship was noted among nature of support, breadth, and content area. Although selection procedures favored helpers with fairly broad roles, several had special expertise in such areas as minor medical problems, racial issues, drug problems, problems of sexual adjustment, and religious issues. Because they were known for their "specialty" some of the respondents were sought out with questions related to their particular area. Many of these approaches would involve requests for direct instrumental support. Nonetheless respondents were frequently able to help focus on more general issues associated with the problem by applying their broad range of skills and varying degrees of both instrumental and emotional support. Additionally in the interaction of the response and degree dimensions response to a crisis situation usually required immediate instrumental intervention, which was facilitated by a helper's special competency (e.g., knowledge of specific medical resources). Later the helpers were also an effective source of support due to their breadth of skills and ability to supply a range of instrumental and nurtural support.

The helpers' general breadth of skills related to their ability to deal with problems of greater magnitude. However



they preferred to rely on emotional support except when instrumental intervention was essential. Partly they did not want to risk blame for the helpees' failures through assuming instrumental responsibility, but more importantly they emphasized the need for the helpee to take the responsibility for his or her own problems. By providing general emotional support, the helpers believed they provided helpees the necessary opportunity to develop their own coping skills so similar problems could be faced in the future. This approach also provided the helpee with the gratification of having "solved" their own problem. Helper preference to provide more indirect and emotional support even in major problems seems another crucial aspect of the role performed in the setting.

Relationship dimensions. The geographic proximity and the interpersonal closeness of the helpee and help-seeker constitute the relationship dimensions of the informal helping role. The interrelationships of these dimensions with those presented earlier is fairly straightforward. However, they highlight some of the more important qualities of the informal role of the respondents. One third of the major helping situations reported by the respondents involved persons living outside the immediate university community. No minor long distance problems were reported, suggesting a direct relationship between geographical distance and the magnitude of the problem situation. In terms of the interper-

sonal dimension, help-seekers previously lived in closer contact with the helper, either in their residence hall or their home town, or they were linked to the helper through people currently in the helper's residence hall network. Thus while the respondents were predominantly involved in helping others in their immediate setting, the relative frequency with which they helped more distant contacts emphasizes a very important aspect of their helping role. This particular aspect points out the importance of the interpersonal system, or social network approach, in developing a full understanding of the dimensions of the informal helping role.

The strongest relationships between the interpersonal dimension and the preceding dimensions were as might be expected. The helpers were all involved more frequently, for longer periods of time, with problems of greater magnitude with their closest friends than they were with more distant acquaintances. However, two primary qualities of their role emerge from a further examination of these interrelationships. These interrelationships suggested that helpers were involved in helping throughout the full range of their relationship network. While they helped their most distant acquaintances only on instrumental issues, they were often involved with persons of moderate acquaintance on major issues, covering considerable time spans, which required a considerable investment of both instrumental and emotional support. Many people are willing to invest a considerable amount of time

and effort to help close friends, but the respondents' willingness to help members throughout their network, and in particular their willingness to invest themselves in supporting moderate acquaintances, are believed to be significant characteristics of their helping role.

Process dimensions. The final two dimensions, initiation mode and style of helping, are broader than the preceeding several dimensions in that they refer to the general process of the helping role. It will be recalled the major distinction noted for the present respondent group in terms of initiation was a differential emphasis on a passive versus passive-active approach. In terms of some dimensions such as those involving a high degree of crises, and in some situations of greater magnitude, this distinction became essentially irrelevant. In such situations as a suicide threat or epileptic seizure the strong situational cues overrode any preferred mode of initiation.

There was another very strong positive relationship between frequency and initiation mode. Those respondents who were most frequently involved also preferred the more passive mode of initiation. As suggested earlier, high frequency of involvement seemed strongly associated with the instrumental demands placed on those helpers who held positions as floor counselors. Although they varied widely on positive versus negative feelings concerning their own role, nearly all of the counselors were looking forward to the end of their floor

counselor role. Many felt that the routine demands of their role had become burdensome and they were anticipating a return to autonomy over their own informal roles. Conversely some of the helpers who were not yet counselors hoped to become one; they saw the role as a means of raising their visibility and expanding their helping contacts.

Additional relationships were observed between initiation mode and breadth of skills, and proximity. In their own area of sub-specialty (e.g., drug problems, or abortion counseling), helpers were more likely to be sought out and to initiate helping situations regardless of their more general preference for initiating situations. In terms of proximity, all but one of the long distance situations were initiated by the helpee. As noted earlier, strength of relationship, and knowledge of helper skills seemed to be primary factors in determining the initiation of long distance relationships.

One of the more complex interrelationships observed was between the interpersonal dimension and initiation mode. With their close friends respondents usually saw their helping as ongoing and reciprocal. Friends were more likely to volunteer a problem and helpers were more likely to be direct in inquiring about problem situations. With more distant acquaintances, helping situations developed almost exclusively at the request of the helpee. Because of limited contact there were channels where the helper could receive relevant



cues. The variance in initiation approaches was most pronounced with moderate friends. They were close enough that the helpee knew the helper's skills and resources and the helper knew the helpee's situation. Yet they did not have a mutual expectation that a problem situation would be brought up and discussed. Thus helper preference for an initiation mode was more likely to govern the development of a helping situation with moderate acquaintances.

The interrelationship of initiation and interpersonal dimensions also emphasized another important aspect of the helping role. In most instances the initiation of helping was not an overture to permanently intensifying the relationship. Once the helping role was initiated, the relationship frequently intensified. However, at the conclusion of the helping, the relationship either resumed its moderate level or was terminated altogether.<sup>16</sup>

Some rather intuitive relationships between initiation and style were observed (e.g., the passive initiators tended to be less directive in their style and the active initiators tended to be more directive in their style). However, the development of initiation mode and helping style and the interrelationships cannot be understood without considering

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<sup>16</sup>Only one respondent, Eva, appeared to violate this pattern by combining close personal relationships and major helping relationships, and she was the only respondent to indicate significant dissatisfaction with her helping role (case presented on pages 110-125).

the contextual dimensions that contribute to the development of the helping role. Style in particular is the most complex of the role dimensions since it characterizes the general integration of strategies and techniques the helpers employed in their role. Although style is influenced by the other role dimensions, the most important aspect of style is what it conveys about the helper's general approach to a range of situations. This constancy of style appears to be primarily a result of the interaction of the context dimensions (personal and environmental variables) introduced earlier. In many ways style serves as the interface between the role dimensions just described and the context dimensions of this role that will be detailed in the following chapter. The context dimensions will be illustrated by means of individual case presentations, because it is from this individual perspective that the complexities of style can be most clearly understood.

#### Concluding Note: Dimensions of the Helping Role

The primary goal of this chapter has been to present a descriptive outline of the specific helping role as seen in the present group of respondents. It is believed that the presentation of these dimensions and some of their more important interrelationships have captured the key qualities of the role of these informal helpers. The following primary aspects emerged: (1) helpers were predominantly involved in

small instrumental situations but were also involved in major personal and interpersonal problem situations with relative frequency (i.e., once every three or four weeks); (2) helpers were only infrequently involved in crisis situations; (3) helpers appeared to have a broad range of interpersonal skills, but several also indicated expertise in "specialty" content areas; (4) helpers could provide both instrumental and emotional support, but they had a preference for supplying emotional support to avoid responsibility for the helpee's situation and as a means of helping the helpee to develop a reliance on their own coping skills; (5) helpers most frequently helped persons who lived nearby, but one-third of their examples involved long distance situations; (6) helpers extended most of their time and effort with their closest friends, but they also helped a full range of network members including instrumental support to distant acquaintances and relatively major emotional and instrumental support to friends of moderate acquaintance; (7) helpers were about evenly divided on a preference for a passive versus active-passive mode of initiation, a distinction which seemed to be primarily a function of the floor counselor role; and (8) helpers appeared to operate most often from a non-directive style with only a few helpers preferring more directive approaches.

While there is diversity along many of these dimensions within this group, these points summarize the broad defining qualities of this particular informal helping role in these

settings. It is assumed that different helpers in different settings might vary in significant ways on these dimensions, and that any analysis of the dynamics and correlates of the informal helping role should be based on a clear statement of the descriptive qualities of the role. In this sense this chapter has provided a general role description from which the more specific and dynamic analysis in Chapter IV can proceed. That analysis will view the informal helping role as a function of personal, interpersonal, and setting contexts over time. This multilevel or interactional analysis will be presented in terms of the specific roles and contexts of four illustrative helpers.



## C H A P T E R   V I

## INTERACTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE HELPING ROLE: A CASE ANALYSIS

The previous chapter presented the dimensions of the informal helping role and discussed some of their possible interrelationships. The present chapter focuses directly on the helping role as defined by the patterns of these dimensions, and explores the interactional context in which the role has developed and continues to evolve. The interactional context refers to the personal, interpersonal, and setting variables of the ecological role conceptualization introduced in Chapter II. In the present section a detailed examination of these variables and their interactions will be made by focusing in depth on four selected informal helpers who will be called Mary, Eric, Mort, and Eva.<sup>17</sup> Each case includes the following: a biographical sketch; a review of the respondent's helping role, his/her satisfaction with the role, and impressions concerning supportive intervention in the role; and an examination of the past and present interactional context of the role.

Following the case section, two additional sections will be presented in this chapter. The first section will be a brief presentation of some possible interactional context

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<sup>17</sup>Although an attempt was made to make this sub-group somewhat representative of the larger sample, taken together these four offer an illustration, not a summary of the total respondent group.

dimensions that are suggested by the material in the four cases. The final section will use the case materials to describe and illustrate the influence of contextual patterns of the informal helping role from an ecological perspective.

### The Cases

#### Mary

Mary is a nineteen-year-old, first-year medical technology major. She is not a floor counselor but hopes to become one. She lives on a seventeen-member corridor in a women's residence hall. Her hometown is suburban. She has one sibling, a brother age 12. Her father is an engineer, necessitating frequent long distance moves for her family. Mary's mother was a medical technologist but she gave up her career following the birth of her children. Mary's father is Catholic and her mother Protestant, and Mary is quite active in the Catholic church. Mary is one of the few respondents to indicate an active religious involvement. Mary is quite close to her family and she endorses "mainstream" values.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Terms such as mainstream, traditional, and counter-cultural are used in each case to suggest the respondent's general orientation to the culture and system of values. These distinctions are by no means clearcut, but in the current context mainstream or traditional indicates someone who favors marriage, the work ethic, definite career goals, and who retains some active religious involvement. Counterculture refers to an orientation which accepts the use of drugs, favors alternative career goals, condones heterosexual and homosexual experimentation, and excludes active contact with formal religion.

Mary is active in residence hall activities and she is looking forward to a career in medical technology.

Helping role. Mary reported her helping involvement as "little things everyday and big things every week or two weeks." Mary uses both passive and active methods of initiating situations. Her major helping examples were people living in and nearby her own dormitory. The issues were usually personal or interpersonal in nature. An example drawn from one of these situations provides some insight into her style:

. . . This girl liked this guy, but the feelings weren't reciprocated. She was hanging around him a lot and wanted to get closer in with him, and he let me know that this was bothering him and that he was trying to isolate himself. It was hard to hear both sides because I really wasn't at liberty to tell either one. . . . This went on for a matter of months. . . .

The girl and I basically talked about his reactions to what she was doing and maybe this was the way he was feeling about things. It turned out that he was willing to be friends with her, but not to have her stick around and she was to form other friendships, and I think it worked out alright. . . They say hi to each other but they are not really close. They began as close friends, but they are not really aggravating each other any more. I come out of it with a sense of amazement because they are both still my friends, and both of them knew the situation after awhile that they were placing me in. . . .

The guy assumed that I was talked to the girl. I didn't come right out and say that because he knew he was putting me on the spot if he asked me. The girl knew. She asked, "Well have you been talking?" and I had to say, well yes I had, and he briefly had mentioned a couple of things. "He feels that you are a friend and nothing more," which is what she had figured out before. I don't think it was damaging for her, but she asked me point blank and it was hard.

In this particular example it is obvious that Mary played a "mediating" role. This example was consistent with Mary's general style which tends to be non-directive and emphasizes sympathy, reflection, development and clarification of alternatives, and supporting the choice of the helpee.

Mary is satisfied with her role. She admits that her role is inconvenient when it conflicts with her studies, but even then she usually puts her work aside because she prefers "listening" to working. When conflicts do develop she says she can delay her involvement and later explain to the person why she did not respond immediately. Mary believes she is an effective helper: "[People] have generally come away from the problem with having it solved or at least looking at both sides so they could solve it themselves. . . ." Mary does not feel an immediate need for additional support for her helping role because she receives such support from her friends. Mary anticipates continuing her informal helping and she hopes to become a floor counselor because she believes it will facilitate her in making helping contacts.

Developmental context. Mary believes her helping role began in high school. There were many influences preceeding the emergence of her role which appeared to contribute to its development. Some of these influences were identified directly by Mary while others were developed from interpretations from the interview material. Principal among these in-



fluences were a strong sense of moral and human values from both her parents and her religion, an appreciation of interpersonal relationships brought about by close family ties, good interpersonal skills developed through coping with her family's frequent moves, the development of a logical and analytical approach to problems encouraged by both parents, a "maturity" in thought and expression developed through a preference for adult companionship during her early years, and a sense of empathy for people with problems which originated with her own experiences of ridicule in childhood because she was too tall and wore glasses. The point is not to suggest that any one of these dimensions had particular importance but rather these interrelated influences created Mary's inclination to be helpful to others.

Mary's high school experiences appeared to reinforce many of these earlier influences. She recalls her high school was controlled by "cliques." Although she was friendly with several groups she was never accepted by any of the more popular groups. Mary reports this as an advantage because it gave her the opportunity "to meet a lot of different people," although she saw herself as somewhat different from her more popular peers.

Probably the most important single experience in the initiation of Mary's helping role was her membership in a high school theater group. As costume mistress she found frequent social rewards in helping members of the cast. Mary

also noted that, while interpersonal relationships within the group were so "open" that she could "forget about what other people said" about her thoughts and ideas, most students thought the theater people "strange" and tended to avoid close social contact with them. The direct reward for helping peers, the opportunity for open interpersonal interchange, and a consciousness of being outside the mainstream of peer experience, made Mary aware of her role as a helper. During this time she extended this helping by supporting a girl who felt isolated from her working mother, frequent mediations in disputes between two particular friends, helping a friend who was too shy to talk to faculty members, and helping a dating couple resolve their differences.

Mary presumably placed more emphasis on high school experiences than most respondents because, as the only freshman, these experiences were more recent for her. Her helping role is one where she frequently helps others who are rejected by another individual or group. Consistent influences throughout her role development seemed to be a strong appreciation of human values from her family and religion, a competence in interpersonal relationships developed from successful coping with a series of challenges, and a sense of empathy for rejected individuals developed from her own experiences. Her experiences apparently produced an awareness of helping situations and the skills necessary to act as an informal helper.

Current context. Mary emphasized the "security" and lack of "social pressure" in her residence hall which appeared to repeat feelings expressed about her family and her high school theater group, feelings that had encouraged her to make contacts with others. She also noted her corridor facilitated the development of her relationships, because it consisted mostly of older students, and she usually prefers the company of people older than herself. Most specifically the existence of a clique on her corridor has directly influenced her helping:

. . .I think that has compelled me to help other people on the corridor or on the floor that were left outside. . . . This is such a big problem in such a big place and I hate to be lonely and I'm sure they would too. . .

Thus key setting variables appear to be the existence of a generally supportive atmosphere that facilitates social contacts and the presence of potential helping situations which are made salient because of their similarity to Mary's own personal experiences.

Mary's network revealed a good integration of helping role functions and general friendship and support functions in the interpersonal context.<sup>19</sup> People she helps tend to be

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<sup>19</sup>Only interpersonal relationships where support is or has recently been an active factor are considered in this section of each respondent's case presentation. Many casual or distant acquaintances are not noted. Figures indicating the total size of each respondent's social network are available in Appendix G.

transitory network members, while she maintains several strong reciprocal support relationships of her own. Many relationships which were sources of support for Mary are with individuals older and more experienced than herself. These relationships appear to provide Mary with positive models for her own development. In addition they provide general support which enables Mary to risk becoming involved in helping relationships. Since she is satisfied with her own support network and does not need to rely on her helpees for interpersonal gratification, Mary can be impartial in her helping.

A more direct influence of interpersonal context is Mary's attempts to transfer the positive characteristics of her supportive models to her helpees. She tends to develop relationships with people she sees as pragmatic, self-determined, and outgoing. In turn she tries to instill these qualities in the people she helps. She is aware of this pattern and explains these personality characteristics have been, and still are, growth issues for her. She believes she tends to be responsive to people facing similar problems.

Primary sources of support for Mary were her parents; Dora, a friend of her mothers; Betsy, a senior corridor mate; Glenda, an older student who was away on a foreign exchange program; and Pam, a recent graduate of the university who had settled in a nearby town.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Betsy was also a major respondent in this study; see case summary in Appendix P.



With the exception of her father and Dora, Mary identified the support as reciprocal in all of these relationships. Her father's support is more understanding and belief in her by him than an active exchange of problems. Mary considers Dora to be her "second mother." Mary shares common interests with her; she is always quick to indicate her concern for Mary.

Mary's mother is the most important of these reciprocal relationships. She describes her mother as her "best friend" and she indicated that she is closer to her mother than any other single person. Mary explains the relationship's strength: ". . .we are both sensible and logical people. . . and [we] both think the same way."

Betsy and Glenda both helped Mary with significant issues. Betsy helped orient her to the university while Glenda helped her resolve a question of religious conflicts. Mary describes both women as "active, instigator-type people" who were also, ". . .friendly, warm and giving to people." Mary noted Betsy was easier to approach, because she is "non-committal on most issues," while Glenda was more judgmental, because ". . .she feels strongly about religion. . . ."

Mary's support relationship with Pam, while still active, is on the decline. During the previous semester they had supported each other on issues concerning dating and marriage. Mary now considers Pam to be a potential rather than an active source of support because they hold different "religious and moral" views.

Helpees Mary identified included Joanna, Julie, and Kelly, all women from her residence hall; and Tom and Don, men from a nearby residence hall. Mary's contact with all of these people except Joanna (the only one living on her corridor) has declined since their helping involvement.

Mary met Julie through a casual conversation. She helped Julie settle a dispute with a roommate by providing emotional support and offering examples from her own experience in settling roommate conflicts. Mary believes their relationship did not develop any further because Julie is an "active social kind of person" who will be leaving the dormitory to join a sorority.

Tom and Kelly were the couple whose helping example was presented earlier (p. 79). Mary thinks her relationship with Tom declined after the helping situation because he was "seeking a new circle of friends" and was only linked to her through her friend Glenda who has left for Europe. Her relationship with Kelly declined because, "I see myself as a lot freer. . . either she is afraid to or won't open up. . . for fear of criticism."

Mary met Don through Tom and, despite his "happy go lucky" appearance, Mary perceived he was lonely and isolated because he was "intense" and had "irritating qualities. . . [that] could get on your nerves." They had several discussions on personal issues, but Mary now sees Don only occasionally because he was linked to her through Tom. Since her

contact with Tom declined, Don also comes around less often.

Mary's helping relationship with Joanna is still in progress. Joanna is a senior student who was ostracized by most of the other women. Mary initiated a companionship with her despite warnings from others that Joanna would "latch on." Mary's own words provide a concise illustration of how Joanna's situation elicited her helping role response:

She is quiet and I tended to be quiet in my earlier years. I limited myself in the number of friends that I had, but now I have this ability to make friends and I don't see that in her. We hold a lot of the same religious beliefs and she is academically bright. . . . I had that sort of problem in the earlier years of school, where if you were bright, people said, "Oh forget it. . . ."

At the time of the interview, Mary gave Joanna companionship and they have discussions. Although Joanna provides some occasional academic assistance, Mary does not consider her a potential source of emotional support.

Similar patterns of obtaining and giving support were also evident in Mary's past relationships. Several of her high school friends who supported her were described as "outgoing and energetic" while people she helps are described as "shy" or rejected by peers. Thus the key to the interpersonal context of Mary's helping role appears to be one where she develops strong support relationships for herself with people she considers positive models, but she responds in a helping manner to people she identifies as experiencing prob-

lems she herself has overcome. This selection process serves to separate her helping role from her friendships and she is able to extend her energies to help those who may or may not return her friendship and support in kind.

The personal variables influencing Mary's helping role are reflected in her style of coping with problems and her general statements concerning herself and her role. When she is faced with a problem she says she first attempts to logically analyze all aspects of the issue before making a decision. If she finds that her logical solution conflicts with her emotional inclinations, she frequently turns to others:

. . .I need somebody to say, "Well you know this is really the way that it should be." And I go to several people to see what they feel, and if they feel the way I do then I know I'm right.

This same approach of separating the "logical" and "emotional" components of a problem is used by Mary in helping situations with others.

In describing herself Mary emphasized she is "calm, reasonable, and down to earth." She added time is not to be "wasted" and she likes "having a sense of purpose." She believes that she has an advantage over many of her peers because she had settled on a career of medical technology while in the tenth grade. These same variables are quite salient for Mary in determining her role behavior:



. . . I try to be as logical and reasonable in solving problems as I can. . . . I care about people . . . . People have called me level headed and sensible. I guess that would attract people to get my attention and everything. . .

Not only are people attracted to Mary's logical, self-assured style, but she believes she is involved in helping because she enjoys initiating contacts. Such contacts help her "to learn more about people", and "there is something to be gained from every personal contact." She also believes that her present helping develops in part from her ability to "identify" with people who are "left out." For Mary it appears that her openness in initiating personal contacts often facilitates the development of a helping situation. This occurs through her perception of the problem being similar to past ones of hers or through the helpee responding to her logical self-assured style with the sense that they could "trust" their problems to her.

Summary. In presenting Mary's summary, and the summaries of the three respondents to follow, emphasis will be placed on those context dimensions which appear most influential. As was emphasized throughout her case, Mary's role appeared to develop from a series of parental and peer interactions, personal orientation, and setting characteristics. In Mary's case these influences appeared to be a process which developed long before her role actually emerged.

One of the most basic, influential dimensions suggested

by Mary's case was that of parental identification. This dimension appeared to have generated numerous personal and interpersonal dimensions that were crucial to her later role development. From her parents Mary developed an appreciation of affiliation which in part led to her present tendency to seek out others. Her parental identification also fostered a strong sense of moral consciousness and an appreciation of human values which is consistent with her willingness to help others. Mary's mother did and still does encourage Mary to openly share problems with her, thereby sanctioning the helping exchange as an appropriate means of interacting.

Parental identification also seemed to be the source of the related dimensions of coping style and problem orientation. Mary learned that problems should be actively dealt with even though solutions are not readily apparent, and the coping style to be used should involve a self-sufficient, logical, and analytical approach. In her present situation it appears that it is this positive problem orientation and logical coping style that helpes find attractive. A final dimension that seems to have its origins with her parents is one of a positive self expectation. Mary has a strongly developed need for constant self improvement. In one sense this appears to have led her to develop her skills to help others successfully, while more directly she applies a similar expectation of self improvement toward her helpees.

Many of these early developing dimensions probably

helped Mary overcome a rather difficult peer situation. The dimension of marginality appears to characterize much of her early peer experience. As a child she admits she was ridiculed for her somewhat ungainly appearance, and her family's frequent moves caused her to constantly face new schools and peer groups. She had a certain degree of success in meeting these challenges which strengthened such dimensions as affiliation, self expectation, coping style, and problem orientation. In addition being introduced to a variety of interpersonal situations developed a strong sense of reward in interpersonal situations for Mary through her philosophy that there is much to be learned from others. In her discussion of her high school years, however, there was a definite feeling that some sense of marginality remained. Given this situation, two dimensions appeared critical in the actual emergence of her role. One was the sanctioning of the helping exchange as a legitimate means of interaction learned from her mother, the other was the positive critical event represented by her experience with the high school theater group.

Mary's high school years were the beginning of other context dimensions which appear to have been carried over in her present setting. Both of these, network growth and peer support, are rather basic and closely interrelated. Network growth is represented for Mary by her friendship preference--those people she sees as somewhat more skilled and adjusted than herself. She tries to incorporate these skills in her-

self and often tries to relay this learning to her helpees. Peer support represents both personal and role support, and Mary is confident she can obtain support from friends on both personal and role related issues. This probably develops confidence and provides a backup security which enables her to extend herself in helping others. A final dimension that actually had its beginnings in childhood, was reinforced in high school, and now appears operative in her present setting, is identification. In recalling her own peer rejection Mary frequently aids others she perceives to be in a similar situation.

A certain limited number of dimensions also seem to evolve from Mary's present setting. Although setting was intended as something of a constant or control factor in the present study, some important dimensions did emerge for Mary -- constancy and security. Setting constancy was important in that Mary perceived her present setting as repeating many of the same characteristics as her high school; cliques, isolated individuals, and the presence of a few "older", more "skilled" friends. Setting security was important for Mary in that she felt that her environment was very safe and supportive. She could thus use coping resources to help others which she might otherwise have had to use to maintain her own adjustment.

It should be noted that the above dimensions are tentative and descriptive. Many of the important interrelation-



ships have only been briefly sketched out or alluded to. The importance of the above is to illustrate how an interactional context can be developed and the potential value of the information it can convey.

### Mort

Mort is a twenty-year-old sophomore with no declared major. He is not a counselor. He lives on a thirty-member corridor in a coed dormitory. His hometown is suburban. He has one sibling, a brother age twenty-four. His father died when he was in junior high school, and his mother works as a business secretary. Mort is Jewish, but he indicates neither he nor his family are active in the formal religion. He is close to his mother, but feels he has little in common with his brother who is making a successful career in their late father's field of business. Mort tends to favor "counterculture" ideals and values over more traditional values. He is not involved in any organized residence hall or university activities. He is uncertain about the future except for a desire to travel.

Helping role. Mort reported he is usually involved in "helping conversations" about "four times a week," although recently he has been less active due to problems of his own (a broken leg and a deteriorating relationship with his girl friend). Mort believes that his helping role has changed from his high school years. At that time he reported that

". . .[helping] conversations with people were a daily thing," and he noted that situations usually involved drugs, ". . . people would call me and say they are bumming out on something. . . ." Recently he believes his role has focused more on people with general personal and interpersonal problems, ". . .people hassleing with their own heads and relating to other people. . . ." Mort feels comfortable with both active and passive methods of initiating role situations. The time span of these situations has ranged anywhere from a few weeks to several years. Although a majority of Mort's situations involved people living nearby, one of his long term and long distance helping situations provides a broad view of his style:

Someone at home. . . . He is going through a wide range of drug problems, and problems with women. The last call that I got from him was about a week and a half ago. He wanted to get married and he wanted to marry a woman who was married already. She has another boy friend and she is seeing him and he wants to marry her, and she wants no part of that type of relationship. He's convinced that he can marry her and support her and all of this.

I don't know why he called. He knew what my reaction would be, which would be to try and talk him out of it. I think I tried to. I don't know how successful I was. . . . An hour and a half he called me from the city, quite a conversation.

I have heard about him since then, and he has skipped the last week and a half of work and he has been doing downers and staying in his apartment.

I have had a variety of discussions with him for a couple of years, heavy discussions and it's gotten to the point where I don't know how to approach his problems anymore. I'm scared of him because I don't know what he is capable of doing. I

was thinking this morning that I should call him and see what is happening, but I can't afford it. Once he gets to talking it's an hour and a half on the phone.

He won't see anybody professionally. I could arrange to have the social worker from the high school see him, but the last time they were together they had a fight. . . . So I don't know what is going to happen, I'm just going to go and see what he says. I don't know. Kind of pull his head together enough to set some goals and try to work them out. . . .

Mort explained past situations where he had helped this man break a heroin habit and had dealt with him concerning suicidal gestures. He notes that during the previous year it was not unusual to receive three telephone calls a week from him.

Mort's style involves many non-directive techniques. However, he also works very actively to attempt to correct what he feels are helpee misconceptions and he strongly encourages the helpee to develop and carry out alternative solutions. In this case and in some others Mort suggested referral to a professional helper.

Mort does not feel inconvenienced by his role, although at times it has caused him to cancel personal plans. His major dissatisfaction is that he believes his role is too limited in frequency at the present time and he wants to be involved with more people. Although his academic standing currently bars him from becoming a floor counselor, Mort would like to become one because he feels the position would insure an expansion of his role. Mort said that he would turn to an

outside consultant only "if a life were in danger," because he believes it impossible to summarize and convey complex helping situations to a third party. At present his preference is to ". . . turn to somebody I consider a helping person myself (such as a friend). . . ." In the future Mort expects to continue his informal helping role, rather than entering a helping profession because he does not feel he could counsel people under a "time limit."<sup>21</sup>

Developmental context. Mort's earliest recollections of helping others began with junior high school, but there is the suggestion that his role also had its origin in general family dynamics. The most basic of these influences was a strong sense of identification with his parents and his grandparents which was characterized by strong support and a high expectation for Mort to maximize his abilities. In addition the family process sanctioned a positive approach to problems:

. . . My mother always told me to look at the problems analytically, just in the logical sequence and the various possible solutions and think how each solution would effect you and the people involved.

His family background also seemed to provide Mort with a sense of human values, an appreciation for open communications, and a feeling of independence, ". . . people were there to support

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<sup>21</sup>A reference to his and a friend's frustrating experience with a "fifty-minute hour."



you in your solutions to your problems. . . . If you didn't want it I had the right to think of things myself."

This combination of support and independence from his family likely enabled him to cope with a rather difficult peer situation. In grade school Mort identified himself and his few friends as "outcasts" of the school who were not accepted by the "other cliques." Part of Mort's problem was his appearance, "I was pretty fat then, about a four foot cube. . . ." Mort explained that "respect for my own abilities," and desire to "do my best," helped him overcome part of this problem. This also involved his first experience in helping. He became known for his skill in bicycle repair and several children began coming to him to have their bicycles fixed. Mort believes that a lasting influence of these childhood experiences was the importance he now places on "accepting" people without making critical judgments.

Mort became most active in his helping role during his last year in high school. His helping involved "all of my close friends and a lot of my second set." He did not identify any specific experience which facilitated this development, but he attributed it principally to his willingness to spend time with people and keep their confidence. This attitude of trust and acceptance probably encouraged help seekers to discuss their problems with him. In addition Mort was involved in drug use to some extent, and much of his helping activity at this time consisted of talking to people with

drug concerns. Other examples he noted from this period include people with severe parental or peer conflicts. Mort's belief in "accepting" others without regard to their lack of peer popularity likely facilitated his ability to assist. As was noted above, Mort attributes his orientation toward acceptance to his own family and childhood experiences.

Although he did not identify them as such, it seems probable that two other factors were encouraging Mort's helping activity at this time. Both involved successful coping with interpersonal challenges. In his junior year Mort moved from an all-male inner-city school to a coed-suburban high school. He found that his friendship group was also changing at this point from those whom he describes as "wierd and half sick" to "very normal" friends. Mort's successfully meeting the challenge of a new social setting and simultaneously strengthening his friendship group might have served a dual function. While initially recalling his previous experiences as an outsider, Mort's successful coping with this situation improved his confidence. Thus this not only sharpened his empathy with other "outsiders," but also provided him with some sense of the skills needed to overcome such problems.

In summary, the origin of Mort's helping role appears to lie in the strong support and expectations he received from his family. An additional factor was their encouragement of an analytical approach to personal problems. His own difficult experiences in peer relationships apparently encouraged

Mort to accept others who had similar problems. Initiation of his helping was often related to expertise, first in repairing bicycles and later to his general knowledge of drug-related problems. As his own interpersonal situation gradually improved, he seemed to retain his empathy for others facing difficult interpersonal challenges and he was able to apply some of his own experientially acquired skills to helping others.

Current context. Mort's experiences related to his residential setting changed from his first to his second year at the university. During his first year he described a situation where he knew and was friendly with most of the people on his corridor. Helping relationships were easily established; ". . . good solvable problems that we could sit down and discuss, things that worked out really well. . . ." During the current year, however, moving to a new corridor and dating a woman who lived off campus (which he explained "stopped me from meeting people") have decreased Mort's satisfaction with his residence environment and have reduced his setting-based helping role. In addition Mort became disillusioned with university life. He had arrived at the university expecting to meet "thousands" of people but instead after his first year he found the university too large, impersonal, with no convenient means to meet people.

During this period of difficulty Mort helped others much less frequently. Recently he is no longer dating the woman

and has established stronger ties to people in his residence hall. He also hopes to move off campus with a group of friends. Although he was still critical of the general university environment, Mort again feels more comfortable with his immediate living environment, and feels he is again more able to help others. For Mort his own sense of security and belonging in his setting strongly influence his ability to carry out his role.

Mort's social network reveals a helping role that is characterized by long term interpersonal commitments. His attitude of "acceptance" of others enables him to maintain relationships with individuals with whom he has differences in values, or with people who have several severe problems. Mort considers several of these people as friends, and one situation involves a loving relationship. The distinction that emerged was that the support exchange in these relationships is almost entirely from Mort to the other people, while Mort has several other relationships where the individuals involved have sufficient coping skills and where the support exchange is much more reciprocal. Thus Mort can invest himself quite heavily in a helping relationship knowing that he can always turn to others in his network who do not direct strong helping expectations toward him.

Key people in Mort's support network include Jack, his roommate; Art and Fay, corridor mates; Kathy, a corridormate and ex-girlfriend; his mother; and his maternal grandpar-



ents.<sup>22</sup> In his relationships with Fay and his grandparents Mort is primarily the recipient of support. In the remaining relationships the support exchange is reciprocal.

Two factors have determined the active continuation of the support relationship between Mort and his grandparents, particularly his grandfather. His family and his grandparents lived in the same building until Mort was fifteen. Shortly thereafter they moved into nearby apartments in a suburban neighborhood. In addition Mort's grandfather was a primary support to him when Mort's father died. Although he could not replace his father, Mort said his grandfather provided him with a necessary "masculine figure." Mort has great respect for his grandfather and believes he is the source of his own desire to be a "perfectionist." This desire is evident in Mort's helping role where his goal is frequently that of helping others to "perfect" their relationships.

Fay's support to Mort developed from the proximity of their rooms and because she "sat and listened for many hours." Although Mort only included Fay among his moderate group of friends, she has strengthened his helping role both by providing him with general support and by increasing his understanding of issues concerning racial and sexual equality. He now finds himself more conscious of these issues in his

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<sup>22</sup>Fay is also a major respondent (see Appendix K).

discussions with others.

Mort gains most of his active reciprocal support from his peers, but he also feels that his relationship with his mother is "unique. . .for a mother and son." Following the death of his father, they began to relate to each other as "two individuals with problems." His mother's non-judgmental acceptance of his thoughts and actions is important. Although he does not turn to her now with specific problems, Mort is still in contact with her about twice a week. This supportive non-judgmental encouragement in the discussion of problems is quite similar to Mort's own current helping role.

Mort believes that reciprocal support relationships exist among himself and Jack and Art because they all hold similar views of "people and relationships." Equally important, however, is that Mort emphasizes differences among them where he feels himself to be deficient. He sees Jack as being very certain about his career and his future and Art as spending a considerable amount of time on his academic work. Mort is uncertain about his future and finds it difficult to spend a sufficient amount of time on his studies. Rather than avoiding this dissonance by seeking other friends, Mort apparently attempts to improve his own position by keeping himself conscious of these more positive models. This consciousness of the need for self-improvement reflects the desire for "perfection" instilled by his grandfather. This awareness in turn facilitates Mort's responsiveness to others attempting

to improve their position.

Even though they have discontinued their relationship as lovers, Mort says he and Kathy can still support each other on major problems. Kathy, like Art, encourages Mort to improve his academic work. Support is also available in several of Mort's more moderate relationships. For example, following an accident in which he broke his leg, one man offered to make a special 200-mile trip to drive him to his home, while another man spent time keeping him company during the first several weeks of his recuperation. Many of these people in secondary relationships with Mort he identifies as more "outgoing" than himself. In the context of his comments concerning the social problems of the university, Mort's attraction to these more outgoing people appears as another attempt to improve himself.

Mort's helpees include Janet, a woman from his high school; Ted, a man he has known since high school; Diane, a woman with whom he had a long-term loving relationship; Rachel, one of his maternal aunts; Rich, a man from his corridor; and Lois, a woman who had nominated him as a helper on the original survey.

Mort's role in these situations ranges from relatively brief contacts to quite long-term, complex involvements. His contact with Janet began with a casual conversation and consisted of eight days of continuous involvement. She began by complaining about her father, but her expressions intensified

to such an extent that Mort became concerned and consulted a trusted school counselor who eventually made a professional referral. Janet felt betrayed and refused any further contact with Mort.

On the other hand, Mort's helping relationship with Ted<sup>23</sup> has lasted several years. Mort describes Ted as someone who "scares people away because he needs them so desperately." Ted frequently calls Mort with problems related to work, drugs, and relationships with women. Despite the pressures involved in this relationship, Mort expects to continue his contact even though Ted has decided against further professional counseling.

Mort broke off a long-term relationship with his girlfriend, Diane, because, as he explains it, he was unable to balance his own needs and the strong helping expectations she placed on him. This situation developed just prior to the interviews and, although it was difficult for Mort to discuss, he explained that it was a reciprocal support relationship, but he felt the demands on him were much greater. Unable to resolve this conflict, he ended their relationship.

The remaining peer helping relationships mentioned by Mort are less extreme but indicate a similar tendency for acceptance and tolerance on his part. Rich, along with Art and Jack, is a member of Mort's closest friendship group, but

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<sup>23</sup>Described earlier in the example on pages 94-95.



Mort does not identify him as a source of support because of his "sexist and racist attitudes." Yet Mort has spent a considerable amount of time supporting Rich concerning a dating relationship problem. Similarly, Lois, who was described by another respondent who knew her well as being "very difficult to get along with," reported that Mort has been quite helpful to her. Mort did not include Lois in his social network and he was unaware that his "occasional talks" with her had been helpful. Finally in his helping situation with his aunt Rachel, Mort was able to draw on his own drug experiences in discussing her concern with her son's drug involvement.

In summary, key influences on Mort's helping role deriving from his interpersonal context appeared to originate with his mother's encouragement of open problem sharing and his grandfather's model of continually seeking self improvement. Mort's early peer groups involved people with a number of significant problems. The importance of accepting others, learned from his mother and his own personal experiences, apparently led him to be open in helping many of these people. He was not always successful, particularly when he found helping expectations in conflict with his own expectations for the relationship. A review of both present and past primary and secondary relationships substantiates Mort's impression that he is developing a group of friends with more effective coping styles than those of his previous acquaintances. Although Mort's role still appears to be one of help-

ing through developing relationships, his present network involves people with less severe problems. Because his current relationships are more stable, he has more flexibility in setting boundaries between helping roles and general friendship roles. Thus while "accepting" people in trouble is important to him, he now has additional network members on whom he can rely for support.

Mort's helping role--one of non-judgmental emotional support--is quite similar to the support he expects from others if he has a problem. He admits that he is somewhat "wary" of going to others for help, because he does not want "suggestions" on what to do. He most prefers someone to listen to his presentation of the problem and the various solutions he has developed. He finds that "thinking outloud" is usually sufficient to help him make his own decisions.

Reflecting on the influences of his general personality, Mort was more informative in what he was unable to say rather than what he did say. He believes the most important aspect of his personality influencing his helping of others was his "sensitivity" to others. He explained that his preoccupation with his recent problems with his girlfriend have caused this "sensitivity" to diminish, but the resolution of this problem has again increased his sensitivity to others needing help. His actual helping style, however, was more reflected by how he viewed himself at the time. He feels unable to describe himself fully because he is undergoing "personality

changes" and he is "questioning a lot of things." Although he was evasive, Mort revealed himself as one who spent a considerable amount of time contemplating his own psychological processes and personality development. It is this same "inner exploration" that he encourages in those he helps.

Mort believes his role is rewarding and meets his own interpersonal needs. Helping involvements bring him "enjoyment," "satisfaction," a feeling of being "honored" and a sense of being "needed." Mort looks forward to and encourages helping role contacts. In addition his open acceptance of others encourages them to discuss their problems with him. Because of his interest in his own personality development, he often seems to encourage more long-term psychological explorations on the part of his helpees rather than supporting the most immediate solutions that come to mind. Thus both Mort's interpersonal needs and his coping style are reflected in his helping role.

Summary. Mort's role developed relatively early, and a very basic and influential context dimension appears to have been parental identification or, since this includes his grandparents, adult identification. The open interaction in Mort's family appeared to help him develop a strong appreciation for affiliation. In addition he was expected to have a positive problem orientation and he was encouraged to develop a self-sufficient, logical, and analytical coping style. These factors are apparent in his present desire to

reach out to others and have them work through their problems. His open discussion of problem situations with his mother provided a model and a sanctioning of the helping exchange. His parents and later his grandfather were important in leading Mort to develop a strong self expectation for improvement and making full use of his own abilities. He now holds similar expectations for his helpees.

Two additional context dimensions appeared to develop out of Mort's home environment: responsibility and introspection. With the death of his father Mort had to assume additional responsibilities in the home and this probably generalized to some degree to his later helping involvement. Although its precise origin is unclear--perhaps resulting in part from expectations of self-sufficiency or problems surrounding the death of his father--Mort developed an introspective approach to situations. This may interact with several other dimensions to lead Mort to turn his analytical style and expectation for self improvement inward. In many instances it causes him to examine the "psychological" aspects of an issue. This introspective orientation is a very salient aspect of many of his current helping involvements.

An experience of marginality appears to characterize much of Mort's early peer experience. Although it is likely that these experiences of peer rejection reinforced his inclination to introspection, the positive problem orientation, the self-expectation to maximize potential, and the sanction-



ing of helping which derive from his family experience were all likely factors in helping him develop the rewarding critical event of helping others repair their bicycles. Similar dynamics were probable factors in his helping people with drug problems during his high school years. Mort also believes that these early marginal experiences are the basis for both his empathy and identification with troubled persons. These dimensions appear to be quite important in Mort's current non-critical acceptance of several of his helpees.

Peer support and network growth also have influenced Mort's role. Mort's network increased greatly in terms of stability from his high school to his college years. As his network evolved from more to less troubled individuals, the magnitude of many of his helping situations has decreased. Similarly the availability of peer support for interpersonal and role related issues has increased. Thus Mort could state that if he needed role support he could go to his own "helping person."

Currently reward is a significant context dimension for Mort. Mort expressed this in terms of being "honored" when sought out for help. It is likely that this relates to his childhood experience of being rewarded when others sought him out for help with their bicycles.

In terms of setting, security appears the most important dimension for Mort. Mort's ability to help others varies with his own sense of adjustment to the setting. Thus he ap-

pears unable to help others unless his own social position is reasonably secure.

### Eva

Eva is a twenty-year-old junior sociology major. She is not a counselor. She lives on a sixteen-member corridor in a coeducational residence hall. Her hometown is suburban. She has two siblings, a sister 18 and a brother 16. Her father works as an accountant and her mother as a clerk. She is Jewish but not active in the formal aspects of the religion. She is quite close to her father but has experienced frequent difficulties in her relationship with her mother. She feels that she has little in common with either her sister or her brother. Eva endorses a mixture of "counterculture" and traditional values and she is uncertain which is more important to her. Eva is active on the counselor selection committee for her dormitory. Her current career goal is to become a social worker specializing in juvenile cases.

Helping role. Eva reports her helping involvement as "daily. . .a constant thing." She uses both passive and active methods of initiating situations, but she uses active methods more so than most of the other respondents. The time span of her helping situations range from a single meeting to several weeks. The content of such situations is generally personal and interpersonal issues. Eva's style is characteristically fairly challenging and confrontive as the following

example indicates. The situation concerns a dormitory resident who came to her with a problem:

. . . His whole attitude toward everything that he does is that he is going to fail. That's his problem. . . he was worried about why he was getting bad grades, and he was worried about the fact that he isn't dating anybody right now and he doesn't have the nerve to start a relationship that's because he doesn't have any confidence in himself. . . because he got hurt once. . . . He's unhappy with his roommate but that didn't come up till much later because he really didn't want me to know about that. But I perceived that a long time ago, so I suggested it and he looked up at me as if to say how in the world could you know that. . . and I questioned him, and I didn't believe him when I knew he wasn't telling the truth, and he flipped out everytime I knew he wasn't telling the truth. So he really put a whole lot of trust in me and started opening up . . . the more I perceived the more he would open up. The more he verbalized everything he saw it in a much clearer perspective and it wasn't so horrendous and he left feeling wow, you can't believe how much better I feel. . . . You made me see a lot of things and it's not so bad. . . . It ended up that he started thinking of things in a positive way rather than " I am going to fail. . . ."

As the above example illustrates, Eva often attempts to define the help seeker's problem for him/her. Although not always well received, her strategy could be quite effective when it hit a responsive chord, or when it helped shortcut maladaptive or misdirected behavior. Although Eva was frequently empathetic with her helpees, she also expected them to examine the "true causes" of their behavior.

Eva is dissatisfied with her helping role. She is currently involved in a helping situation with a married couple that is not going well. Instead of helping she now finds

herself between the husband and wife. Eva said she how realizes that she frequently becomes emotionally "overinvolved" in her helping and she tends to encourage "dependencies" in her helpees. She wants to continue her role, but she is also quite aware of a need to "limit" the extent of her involvements. Although active on a committee that selects floor counselors, Eva does not wish to become one. She explains that she prefers to keep her helping informal and "as a friend." She added that she does not want to be burdened with "administrative responsibilities." Eva said that she would most definitely use a consultant if available. She explained, ". . .it's the best idea that I've heard yet. It would really take a lot of pressure off of me. . . ." Not surprisingly she related this to her most current difficulties with the married couple. Eva expects to continue helping both informally and formally by going into the field of social work. She hopes, however, to adopt a more passive mode of initiation of situations.

Developmental context. Eva says that her helping role began in late elementary school years. Her experiences with her parents emerge as a very important factor in this early development of her role. Eva identifies strongly with her father. She describes him as ". . .easy going. . .extroverted. . .friendly. . .someone who would do anything for anyone." On the other hand, Eva has been in constant conflict with her mother and she describes her as " shy, withdrawn, and self-



ish." She elaborated this distinction further:

. . .she never really seemed to need me a whole heck of a lot. I always put all my emphasis on anything that if only I could share it with my mother. . .if only she could listen to me. . .I always tried to model myself after my father. . .

In addition, with both parents working, household chores were primarily Eva's responsibility. She recalls that she received little reward for chores done, but was strongly criticized for tasks left incomplete. Eva learned the positive rewards of helping from her father, while she also appeared to learn that helping activities would protect her from attacks from her mother. Only since her stay at college has Eva been able to resolve many of the conflicts that existed between her and her mother.

By the time she was in sixth grade Eva was active in her peer informal helping role: ". . .everybody was always calling me when they were upset. . . . They always felt just really comfortable in coming to me." She attributes this development to two factors: her own troubles made her more "sensitive" to people's problems and helping was a method of maintaining peer relationships. She remembers herself as being "ugly, inferior, unpopular, and unathletic." During her junior high years she recalls that she had a group of "close friends," but she now suspects they were her friends because "I would do anything for them. . .played the sucker . . .for popularity."

In high school Eva's position improved somewhat as she became active in a variety of groups, clubs, and political activities. She was also active in her helping role. Examples she cites include three separate people with dating or marital problems, a woman with parental problems, and a man with dependency problems. Although she is no longer as dependent on her helping to maintain her relationships as she had been in junior high school, several of these examples indicate Eva still considers helping someone as a primary means of beginning a relationship. Also at this time her peer support was insufficient in helping her to cope with her own problems at home. At one point she left home to live with neighbors, and at another time a teacher discovered her writing a "diary" of her problems and took time to work with Eva on some of her problems.

It is probable that much of Eva's role developed out of an attempt to satisfy her own needs. Her father serves as a positive model of some of the skills and rewards of helping others, but Eva also tries to use helping as a means of coping with her mother's rejection. Helping was also the strategy she used in attempting to cope with peer rejection. As she grew older, Eva was able to meet more people through involvement in many activities. However she still retained her helping as a primary method of developing relationships. Although her own experiences enabled her to respond to and effectively help people with problems, she at times finds her

own needs overriding the needs of the person she is helping. These issues remain unresolved for Eva at the university.

Current context. Eva believes that living in the university setting has increased her "independence" and her "sense of responsibility to myself and other people." She feels that her exposure to "so many different ways of life" has increased her self-understanding and improved her perspective on some of her own problems. This emerging self-awareness is most likely a necessary step in her developing a better understanding of the dynamics surrounding her helping role.

Changes in her residence area, however, have had a much more direct influence on Eva's helping role. In her first year at the university, Eva's helping was more limited because she found it difficult to meet people and develop relationships. Despite her political activism in high school she has felt "threatened" by the other students in her previous residence area because they were "too radical." She finds the living conditions in her present residence hall much more favorable:

. . .Living in [my dorm] is an advantage over living in a tower. It's a much closer knit group of people. I know people on every single floor on every single corridor. You just don't do that in a 22-story tower. . . .

This general supportive atmosphere and the increased ease of interpersonal contact seem to facilitate Eva's initiation of helping contacts. It is unlikely that Eva would have been

able to continue her helping role without these experiences of positive growth and general feelings of acceptance and support provided by her residential setting.

The key interpersonal variables influencing Eva's helping role are her difficulty in establishing stable support relationships of her own, and her too frequent use of her helping role as a mechanism to establish and maintain relationships. Of all the respondents, Eva has developed the least effective integration of her friendship and helping roles. The expectations she communicates to many of her helpees are mixed. She expects them to be dependent on her as a helper, but she also suggests that they become her friends. If, however, the person actively responds to the friendship communication by demanding a more reciprocal relationship, Eva will often find herself having to back away and trying to set limits without understanding what has occurred. The difficulties developing from these conflicting expectations considerably reduce the effectiveness of Eva's helping role.

Relationships in Eva's network in which she is primarily the recipient of support include her parents; Aileen, a woman from her high school who now lives nearby campus; and Fay, a friend from another corridor in her residence hall.<sup>24</sup>

Although Eva indicates that her relationship with her

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<sup>24</sup>Fay is also a respondent, see Appendix K.



mother has improved considerably since she has been attending the university and although she indicates both parents as sources of support she still has a preference for talking to her father. Her father, however, insists that her mother be included:

. . . So when I call home and I'm really upset. . . it automatically includes both parents even though I feel better talking to my father. I want my mother there, I want that kind of relationship. She is still my mother and I still love her and I still want to be friends with her, so I keep trying.

This suggests that Eva's support relationship with her mother is still more of a wish than reality.

Eva identifies both Aileen and Fay as people who are "less emotional" and more self assured than herself. Because Aileen lives off campus Eva explains that they have only infrequent contacts. Eva says she attempts to model herself after Aileen because she is more "effective" and more "objective" than herself. She also considers Aileen to be a primary source of support because Aileen knows more of her personal history than the rest of her university network.

While Eva considers her support exchange to be more reciprocal with Fay than with Aileen, Fay in her own interview considered their relationship as one where she primarily provides support to Eva. Considering Eva's apparent tendency to overstate friendships, Fay's report is deemed more accurate. Eva describes Fay as "compassionate" and "understanding," and adds that Fay has contributed a great deal to her understand-

ing of the women's movement.

Primary relationships involving reciprocal support include two older married female cousins; Alice, a high school friend who is now married and living in Florida; Lena, Eva's roommate; and Rachel and Eric, two friends from her residence hall.<sup>25</sup> The important aspects of these relationships is that in person supportive contact is only available from Rachel at the time of the interviews.

Eva's support exchange with her cousins consists primarily of long distance telephone calls concerning a variety of family problems. Distance is also an obvious factor in Eva's relationship with Alice. They originally met in high school when Eva was able to help Alice with a boyfriend problem. In return Eva found Alice to be a source of support because she was more "intelligent" and "level headed." Because of the distance, Eva describes their present support as that of mutual "acceptance" rather than active emotional or problem solving support.

Eric and Eva have known each other for three years and their relationship has vacillated between a friendship and loving relationship. Eva explains she "follows" Eric's advice "all of the time," because "he is calm. . .very sensible and very logical." In return she reports that she has "brought him out of his shell." He is more outgoing and more

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<sup>25</sup>Eric is also a respondent. See pages 125-140,

willing to express his feelings. However, at the time of the interview, their relationship was temporarily blocked due to a disagreement concerning Eva's current helping involvement with a married couple.

Disagreement over the same situation is also disrupting Eva's relationship with Lena, her roommate. Eva had originally decided to become Lena's roommate because she considered her to be "easy-going" and to be someone who "would be a calming force in [her] life." Instead she has come to feel that Lena is "controlling" her life by making "decisions" for her and telling what she can and cannot do. At the present time Eva says that Lena is trying to convince her to cease her helping involvement with the married couple. It is quite evident that Eva is experiencing conflict between the role expectations of these key network members and her actual role activity.

Eva's only immediately available source of strong reciprocal support is Rachel. Eva says that their relationship began by her keeping Rachel company because she had few friends and was more of a "taking" person than a "giving" person. Eva explains that Rachel had a lot of "potential to be caring" and by supporting her and by taking an interest in her, Eva believes that Rachel is now able ". . .to see a lot of things in relationships she never did before. . ." While she describes several of her key network members as calm, easy going, and more self-assured than herself, Eva seems un-

able to make use of their support, and instead she is turning to someone she identifies as a recent helpee for acceptance.

People Eva identifies as currently being in helping relationships with her are Kurt and Bob. Kurt is a man in her residence hall whose helping situation was described in the example on page 111. Their relationship, which Eva describes as "friendly" rather than "friends," has lasted three years. Eva reports that she has supported Kurt periodically over this time and in many ways she believes he has been "dependent" on her. Currently she is attempting to encourage him to develop more responsibility for himself. Although he is "sympathetic" she does not consider him a source of support because ". . . he does not have that much to say. . . ." In addition, since Kurt is a friend of Eric's, Eva does not wish to trust any confidences to him.

Bob is the central figure in the helping situation that is causing Eva's current role conflict. She knows Bob and his wife from when they lived near each other in a previous residence hall. After their marriage and the birth of their child, Eva occasionally babysat for the couple. Bob became dissatisfied with his marriage and turned to Eva for support. What previously had been an inefficient style of encouraging dependent friendship in helpees became more serious when Bob decided he wanted to leave his wife and begin a relationship with Eva. In her later interviews Eva explained that she was trying to terminate her involvement, but felt responsible be-



cause the couple would not seek counseling. She admits that she now understands Eric's and Lena's positions more clearly. She explains that this experience makes her understand how much of her previous helping has been characterized by over-involvement and creating dependencies. Eva wishes to continue her informal helping but she is uncertain as to how she might develop a more efficient style.

In summary, the relationships in Eva's current social network appear to reflect a helping role that originated with her childhood attempts to gain recognition and acceptance from her mother and her peers. Similar to the other respondents, she appears to seek supportive friendships with people who possess coping skills that she would like to acquire for herself. The interaction of role expectations communicated by some of Eva's stronger relationships and her own emerging self awareness have caused Eva to attempt modifications in her helping role. If this process continues it seems likely that she will develop a more clear distinction between developing balanced and reciprocal relationships and her own needs to obtain acceptance and validation by means of her helping role. For the present though, Eva appears to be too uncertain of her own sources of support to provide impartial support to her help seekers.

Eva's commitment to helping is evident in her own coping style. Whereas most respondents indicated a preference for reasoning a situation through before turning to others for

guidance, Eva quickly seeks the assistance of others, explaining: "I feel much better when I talk things out. I hate keeping things inside. . ." She found her supporters to be most helpful when they serve as a "sounding board" when she becomes "too emotionally wrapped up in something to see it clearly." Yet, as previously noted, she has difficulty accepting opinions of friends when they differ from her own. Her oftstated need for acceptance seems to limit her ability to receive support as well as supply it.

Eva is quite aware of her personal dynamics and their contribution to her helping role. She describes herself at times as being "neurotic," "hysterical," "overemotional," and "high strung." She considers being "involved with people" as the most important aspect of her life. Her statements about herself and her helping role leave little room for doubt:

. . . It's like I can't live any other way. . . It seems to evolve from involvement. . . It's a need to help. . . It's a need to be needed. . . I am happy in the counseling role. . . It makes me feel worthwhile. . . A real need for self worth. I think that it manifests itself in helping other people and getting that satisfaction and that feeling of importance and meaningfulness.

Other respondents also comment on the "need to be needed" but none express it with Eva's intensity. The same need for contact and involvement that leads Eva to be active in initiating her role also appears to limit her ability to retain the

necessary objectivity. In many ways her own deficiencies in coping interfere with her effectiveness in developing coping skills in others.

Summary. Eva believes her role developed quite early. Although parental identification appears to have been a primary influence it is of a very different nature than in the first two cases that were presented. On the one hand Eva identifies her father as a positive helping model and suggests that his helping of others represents a sanctioning of the helping process. On the other hand Eva's constant conflict with her mother and her continual attempts to gain acceptance appear to be a dominant influence up until the present time.

This influence's substance has been to impart a negative or ambiguous aspect to most of the context dimensions of her role. Eva's difficulty with her mother is reflected in affiliation by a seeming constant search for acceptance from others. Although her attempts to please her mother likely led to a further sanctioning of the helping process, much of Eva's interaction with her mother left her uncertain as to her own self-expectation. In reaction Eva did seem to develop an active approach in problem orientation, but she lacks self sufficiency in coping style. Her choice is to turn to others as soon as possible. Eva's current helping role still reflects a strong need for affiliation rather than a positive valuation of it. The sanctioning of the helping

process suggests, as a primary means of gaining recognition, a process which is also quite apparent in her current role.

Eva's description of her early peer interaction reflects a strong sense of marginality. She was not well-equipped to meet this challenge and the reward value in helping soon led her to develop helping as a primary means of relating to others. From both her family and peer background, Eva also seems to have developed a strong sense of empathy and identification with persons needing help. This period, while influencing her to develop a coping style that emphasizes seeking help, also seems to foster a strong tendency for introspection, represented in her present role by frequent insistence that her helpees develop better "insights" into the "true causes" of their problems.

Network growth is also an important role dimension for Eva, but it reflects a lack of stability. Eva's network growth seems to be interchangeable, i.e., she does seek out people with qualities she aspires to, but the volatile nature of her relationships often cause these people to disappear, at least temporarily, from her network. Thus she has a constant need to develop or replace these resources. More specifically peer support plays an uncertain function in her role, which is reflected in her strong endorsement of a supportive role intervention.

Eva's strong interpersonal needs make density and security important setting dimensions for her. The high density



in the setting helps satisfy some of her interpersonal needs and also highly increases the probability of helping contacts. The lack of challenge in her present setting permits her to be comfortable enough with others so that she can initiate helping situations, whereas this is less true in a previous dormitory residence.

Eva's own admission of her need to be needed and of her creation of dependencies suggest a strong dominance dimension in which she uses helping as a means of establishing some control or dominance over her interpersonal relationships. Eva's case was in many ways unique in that it presents a picture of a helper in crisis. It is only now that she has begun to verbalize some of the more maladaptive aspects of her role. Although she has yet to resolve many of her difficulties, actually going through the interactional description has helped her define and understand some of her difficulties.

### Eric

Eric is a twenty-year-old junior anthropology major. He is a counselor on a twenty-one member corridor. His hometown is a small industrial city. His sister is 18. His father works in a repair shop, while his mother works for a large electronics manufacturer. Eric is Catholic but says he is not at all active in religion. He feels close to his family but says there is some distance developing as he establishes his own life. Eric endorses many mainstream values, but he

places a high value on social change through constructive community action. His goal is to attend graduate school.

Helping role. Eric reports a moderate frequency of helping involvement--"big things happen maybe two or three times a semester, but little things once every two weeks. . ." He adds this is not a "constant thing," explaining that several incidents might develop one week and none the next. "Small thing" for Eric mean the routine academic and administrative questions that people approach him with because he is a counselor. Major things include situations involving significant personal and interpersonal issues. Eric prefers to be passive in initiating helping situations. The time span of his involvements ranges from a single brief conversation to a period of several weeks. In the following example Eric reveals a considerable amount of sophistication in handling a complex and difficult situation:

One another corridor, a girl would leave notes on people's doors at night saying that she knew the rest of the floor hated her, and that she was going to kill herself. . . . They came over to me and said, "Talk to her and see what is going on." She would come over and talk to me every once in awhile, and she told me that she had had an abortion and was seeing a psychiatrist. . . and stuff like that. She told me about the problems on the floor, that's another situation where I sort of calmed her down. . . . It was only eight people, a small corridor which made it worse. Her roommate had left her, she told me she was leaving because she couldn't stand living with her. I referred it to the clinic after awhile. I talked to people who knew her before and they told me about her past, and how other roommates had moved out, and how her mother is divorced. . . . So I spoke to other people on the

floor and I didn't tell them her story. . .but I said they should try and understand the situation and deal with it the best they can. She still comes over and likes to talk because she doesn't have too many friends and she doesn't communicate with the people on the floor at all. . .

. . .She stutters, she is very nervous when she talks. She is lacking in self-confidence. People laugh at her and they say oh, come on, smarten up. But I just sit there and listen. I don't want to make her nervous. . . I also told her to see their situation too.

As the above example suggests, Eric prefers a non-directive approach in one-to-one situations, but he also has good "consultant-like" skills. He says that his primary goal is to "point [helpees] in the right direction," and "to have them think it out for themselves."

Eric is generally satisfied with his role. He says he feels inconvenienced by his role only when he has problems of his own, but even then he finds the time to help the person. He comments that it is his "attitude" that "things will always work out." Thus he is not too troubled by assuming extra responsibilities. Eric is a floor counselor and he believes his counselor role has helped him in his interests of crisis intervention and community building. It has enabled him to become more involved in the "inner workings and organization" of the residence hall. On the other hand, he says that the title of counselor makes him uncomfortable because he would rather just "fit in with everybody else." Eric has made use of a consultant service available in a local resource center, and he believes such a service is an important resource for

people in his position. Eric expects to continue his informal helping, because it "is a natural type of thing." In the immediate future he has hopes of becoming a student dormitory administrator so that he can expand upon his interests in community building activities.

Developmental context. Eric did not become consistently involved in peer helping until after his arrival at the university, but his early family experiences suggest some basis for his role. Eric's family background fostered both independence and a sense of responsibility. Since both of his parents worked and his father was off only one day a week, Eric said it was "expected" that he would help to carry out many of the household responsibilities. Tasks were not "assigned" but Eric remembers that it was suggested in an "easy going" manner that things be done. Eric believes that the general "non-authoritarian" approach of his parents has helped him assume an "easy going" and "calm" approach to life and its situations. Similar descriptive terms appear in the nominations Eric received as a peer helper.

Additional family influences on Eric include a very strong sense of support, a positive identification with both parents, particularly his mother, and a high expectation for success and self improvement. Eric reported that both parents were "very good," "giving," and "lenient." He shared many of his mother's values: "she feels about things the same way I do. . .we talk about just about everything." Both



parents were quite invested in Eric's continued education since his father had been unable to finish grammar school. This family experience, which provides a strong sense of support, encourages openness, interaction, and a desire for self improvement and facilitates a sense of responsibility, appears to have provided some basis for Eric's interest in helping others.

Eric's opportunity to establish extended peer relationships was limited during his high school years because he commuted some 16 miles to an all-male Catholic prep school. In addition there were few persons his own age in his own immediate neighborhood. Eric was active in several school organizations such as the newspaper and the drama club but his distance from the school precluded his participation in many of the more general activities that were held during non-academic hours. These blocks to extended peer contact also likely limited Eric's opportunities to develop extended peer helping situations.

During this time one specific experience occurred that seemed to influence the nature of Eric's interest in helping. He became involved in a community project to establish teenage drop-in centers in his hometown. Since a city curfew kept young people out of the parks and the police had begun to restrict youth gang activities, the centers provided an alternative. Eric was active in the program for two years until political favors turned and the program lost much of

its support. Much of Eric's current and future interests in helping are directed at community building interventions.

The support of Eric's family, his strong identification with his mother's values, and his involvement in community activities provide some clues to Eric's strong sense of self and his interest in human affairs. Setting, rather than personal limitations, appears to have delayed his active involvement in peer helping until he entered the university.

Current context. Eric has a favorable view of both the university and his residence hall. He considers both to have numerous resources and opportunities for interpersonal interaction. His major critique of his residence hall is that it is "too homogeneous" in that it is overrepresentative of "white middle class values." He believes there is a loss in not being exposed to more minority students and to more students with differing life style. He admits, however, that the present make-up of the dormitory makes it a "comfortable" place to live. He points out that the lack of personal differences contributes to a "good community" and "good communications." He believes that the close personal contact made possible by this atmosphere was a primary influence in initiating his helping role:

. . . I think it was probably just living with people that did it. . . . In high school I wouldn't have considered myself a helper at all. . . . You didn't get to know [people] because you weren't living with them. . . . Dorms can be a real negative experience. . . but they can be positive too.

[You have] more frequent exposure and being close to [people] too. . . . Here it's a constant thing. It builds your confidence. . . . You do something for somebody. . . and you see that your advice is good and that you are doing something good. So that kind of reinforces you.

This suggests that the opportunity for extended peer contact and the availability of "feedback" were both important in initiating Eric's helping role.

The key interpersonal influence on Eric's helping role is the apparent stability of his social network and the existence of several strong reciprocal support relationships. His background of strong familial support and a relative independence of peer relationships in his high school years has given Eric the ability to be selective in choosing his friends. He identifies only one helping relationship where the person is a permanent member of his network. In all other relationships support is either reciprocal or not a factor.. This clear separation of general friendship relationships and dependent helping relationships enables Eric to be objective and efficient in his role. Initiation and conclusion of helping relationships are clearly marked. Helping in terms of companionship and relationship building is reserved for friends while his support of help seekers is more focused and more directed toward problem solving. By responding only to the helping expectations of help seekers Eric seems to maintain a role that is consistent with his own expectations and avoids the potential conflict of mixed friend-

ship and helping expectations.

Eric's reciprocal support relationships include Eva, Tony, Kurt, and Ann, all friends from his residence hall; Doug, an old neighborhood friend; John, a friend from high school; and Russell, a new friend from his hometown.<sup>26</sup> Eric is close to his parents but he describes their support more as general parental acceptance. He indicates that he turns to his peers with any problem that he might have. Eric notes that while he was growing up, however, he always turned to his mother with his problems because his father "just would not be able to deal with it." The fact that Eric makes this distinction indicates that his mother encouraged an open discussion of personal problems, thus sanctioning this as a way of responding to others.

Eric considers Eva, Tony, and Kurt to be members of his closest friendship group. They had all lived together in a previous residence hall. Of the three, Eva has the most influence on Eric's helping role. Eric substantiates Eva's description of their relationship in saying that they once dated each other, but that now they are just close friends. He also agrees that he can remain objective and "withdraw" from a helping situation if necessary, while Eva will "become "too involved" and "goes in head over heels." Despite this

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<sup>26</sup>Eva is the respondent whose case was previously presented (pp. 110-125). Ann was also a respondent. See Appendix L for her case summary.



difference Eric says that they seek out each other for support and advice because they tend to share similar views of others, and because they "know each other so well." He points out, however, that they frequently do not accept each other's advice, because they each hold "strong opinions," and that support comes principally in the opportunity to discuss an issue.

Eric explains that Eva has influenced him in his role because she "points out a lot of things. . .that I knew but that I never acknowledged." He clarifies this by saying Eva has shown him that he cuts himself off from others by being guarded and putting up "walls." Her focusing on this issue helps him extend himself more into the helping of others. In this case Eva's style of combining helping and friendships works to Eric's advantage. In return, it seems that Eric's more objective style is critical in helping Eva develop a perspective on her own helping role. Eric adds that he has also learned to restrict his own role after having the opportunity to observe the difficulties generated by Eva's over-involvement.

The remaining relationships suggest Eric has good abilities to obtain support from diverse sources. He says that he could discuss "any problem" with both Tony or Kurt and he describes Kurt as being quite similar to himself in background and personality. On the other hand, he points out that Tony has his own group of friends and cultural inter-

ests, was less academically oriented than himself, and took a more "humorous" view of situations than he did. Eric believes they are similar in their assuming a "calm" approach to situations. Similarly Eric says while he and Ann differ in personalities, friendship groups, and interests; he could share general problems with her because they share the same "values" in that they are both "helping persons" and they can both trust each other with confidences. He adds, however, that he would be more likely to discuss a "personal problem" with Eva, Tony, or Kurt.

Eric has continued a strong support relationship with Doug, his old neighborhood friend, even though he considers Doug to be much more concerned with "success and money" than himself. On the other hand, Eric believes he is quite similar to John in that they share the same values and worked together on the same political campaign in their home town. Eric has supported John through several problems with his family and in turn he says he is able to discuss "any problem" with him.

Eric met Russell through a mutual friend, and, although Russell lives ten miles from Eric's hometown and is following a business rather than an academic career, Eric considers him to be a source of support because he "shows concern" and is "logical and intelligent."

Amy was the only person in Eric's network where he considers the relationship to be primarily a helping one. She

is a member of his original friendship group of Eva, Tony, and Kurt. Eric says that he has supported her with problems related to her self concept and her relationships with others. She has left the university but they maintain contact through letters and telephone calls. In addition, Amy's association with the other members in Eric's network help sustain their contact.

In summary, Eric's current social network reflects his ability to obtain support from a number of sources. On the strength of this support he is able to extend himself to help others. His relationship with Eva appears to be particularly influential in facilitating his helping role. His network also reveals a good ability to separate general friendship and dependent helping roles, thus eliminating a primary source of role conflict in the informal helping situation.

Eric's style in helping others is similar to his personal coping. The reciprocal support relationships that he indicated in his social network reveal that he has little hesitancy about turning to others. He points out, however, that he does not do this without first trying to work through a problem on his own and he seeks out others only if he believes that "they can help me along." Similarly he expects his helpees to be fairly self reliant and to be analytical and pragmatic in the solutions to their problems.

In discussing his self concept, Eric presents something

of a paradox. He says he personally "feels different than [he] comes across to people." He explains that while he often actually feels pessimistic and "unsure" of himself; when he is helping people he is always "optimistic" and gives an appearance of being self-assured. He considers his ability to be "calm and easy going" to be one of the most important aspects of his personality because it enables him to be "logical" rather than "emotional" in his thinking.

Eric's bearing appears to affect his helping role on two major dimensions. First, as his nominations indicate, people seek him out because he appears as "calm, reasonable, and logical," someone to trust. In turn his "logical and calm" approach enables him to distance himself and to set limits on his helping role.

Much of Eric's "pessimism" is related to concern over community and social issues. As a result much of his helping is directed toward "improving the community." His intervention with one woman (p. 126-127) revealed that in addition to providing individual support to her, he also worked with the other residents of the corridor in an attempt to improve general group relations. On his own corridor where he has counseling responsibilities he considers "community building and communications" to be of primary importance. In speaking of his informal role he says that such activity gives him "satisfaction," and that it is an important way to prevent problems from developing:



. . . If you have community you don't have that loneliness and alienation. . . well definitely there is a satisfaction to it. I like the community and I think that most people do, and if you see you have something to offer, you may as well offer it. You may as well be worth something, and if that is what you have to offer you may as well do it. . .

For Eric, his sense of responsibility, and his feelings of satisfaction appear to outweigh the effect of any feelings of pessimism or uncertainty in influencing his helping role. In addition, his ability to be "calm and logical" despite some feelings to the contrary appear to be some of the primary characteristics which attract help seekers to him.

Summary. The relatively late development of Eric's helping role suggests a rather different emphasis in the influence of the context dimensions than was noted in the previous cases. Parental identification does seem to be important, particularly in terms of his mother's influence, but the general influence of this dimension seems less immediate than in the three previous cases that have been presented. A positive self expectation, a positive problem orientation, and an active, analytical, coping style all seem to have been fostered by the general supportive atmosphere provided by his parents, but these dimensions seem to have developed their importance in their interaction with setting dimensions. Three dimensions which seem to have a more direct link to parental interactions are a sense of responsibility, sanc-

tioning, and moral consciousness. Eric believes that he shares many of his mother's moral and humanitarian beliefs. In addition her encouragement to openly discuss problems appears to provide some sanctioning of the helping process. Finally, with both parents working, Eric did develop a strong sense of responsibility in that he was "expected" but not directed to help out in the home.

Again Eric did not recall his early peer experiences as having a strong impact. Marginality was present to some extent because his commuting limited his involvement in some school activities, but this does not emerge as a particularly significant factor. Much more important was the critical event of being involved in the community youth center project which seems to have directly facilitated many of present helping interests.

Although developmental dimensions did have some influence it is the interaction of current context dimensions that seems most important. For Eric both setting density and security seem to be quite important. He suggests that living with such a high density of people facilitates his helping. The general lack of challenge in the setting brought about by a similarity of culture and interests did much to facilitate interaction. Network growth was a factor but for Eric it was more a growth in size rather than stability that was brought on by the high availability of people. An additional dimension of network separation seems to be rather marked in

Eric's case. He maintains clear separation between those relationships that are purely helping relationships and those where the relationships are more balanced. Such separation appears to prevent the role conflicts that other helpers sometimes experienced. Peer support plays a very direct role. Eric explains some of his friends have actively encouraged him to become more involved in helping and that these same friends help him remove some of the "walls" that prevent him from becoming involved with others.

A final important influence appears to be the interrelationships of a reward coping style and responsibility dimensions. Eric says he finds helping improves his sense of self worth. Despite personal uncertainties he believes he should be logical and calm in his coping style. Thus the reward value in helping and his ability to help develop calm and logical solutions make for a good "fit" between himself and his helpees. In addition once he is convinced by his peers that he has certain skills, his sense of responsibility to the community is an additional incentive for involvement.

Although the interview "set" in many ways favors an elaboration of developmental context dimensions Eric's case illustrates the marked impact current context dimensions can have on the development and style of the informal helping role.

### Summary and Discussion of the Cases

In part the purpose of these case studies has been to illustrate how the various role dimensions discussed in Chapter V combine to form distinctive helping roles for each person. Each role, however, in turn is related to the various contexts of the individual: developmental and current setting, personal, and interpersonal contexts. Thus the cases also illustrate the interactional perspective which suggests that different helping roles will be systematically related to these contexts. The contextual differences reflected in these cases can be summarized in two ways: (a) the significant differences of the specific dimensions within each context (developmental and current) which seemed important for the different individuals, and (b) the different patterns of interactions between the major contexts as suggested by the various cases. This first section will compare the various context dimensions as they were presented in the individual case summaries.

#### Context Dimensions of the Helping Role

Developmental context. Parental identification--a primary developmental dimension suggested by these four cases--refers to the presence of a close interactional and psychological relationship with at least one parent or parent type figure. Parental identification appeared to be the source of



of several additional dimensions which resulted in the eventual development of the helping role. In three of the four cases--Mary, Mort, and Eric--this identification was generally positive and supportive in nature while in Eva's case there were both positive and negative aspects. In the three positive cases the stronger identification appeared to be with the mother. General dimensions which seemed to result from this identification were a sanctioning of the helping process, the development of a positive problem orientation, and positive self-expectation. Sanctioning occurred at times through parental modeling, but more often it seemed to develop from parents or other adult relatives encouraging an open discussion of problems. A positive problem orientation depended on the parents fostering an active approach to problems, and self expectation seemed to derive from the parental message that one should maximize their abilities.

In Eva's case, sanctioning, problem orientation, and self expectation appeared to be influenced much more by conflict and ambivalence. Sanctioning seemed to develop not only from her observations of her father as a positive model, but also from her discovery that helping behaviors were an effective means of pleasing her mother. In coping with the difficult home situation that she described, Eva apparently was able to develop a fairly active and positive problem orientation. Still the uncertainties in her self expectation which she also attributed to this situation have caused her

considerable difficulty in her helping role. While Mort, Mary, and Eric's positive self expectations seemed to lead them to encourage similar orientations in their helpees, it seems probable that Eva's uncertain self expectation had led her to emphasize these aspects of her helpee's situation. In emphasizing these issues she can then justify the need for her to be more directive in her helping role.

Additional major dimensions developing out of parental identifications appeared to be affiliation, coping style, responsibility, moral consciousness, and introspection. Again helpers varied along these dimensions. Mary, Mort, and Eric (to some degree) all reported a positive orientation toward affiliation and human interaction as originating in the supportive and acceptive atmosphere in their homes. This in turn seemed to encourage them to be open and interested in others. For Eva, on the other hand, personal need was a very strong aspect of affiliation which appeared to have a direct relationship to some of the more maladaptive aspects of her role.

Moral consciousness, which refers to a strong belief in human values and doing what is "right", seemed to be most influential in Mary's case, somewhat true for Eric while it did not seem to emerge as a major dimension for Eva and Mort. For Mort, Eric, and Eva, a strong sense of responsibility apparently developed from conditions of parental absence in the home, while for Mary responsibility seemed to develop more

from a general parental expectation.

Coping style and introspection are interrelated, but it is felt that they are separate enough to warrant being labeled as different dimensions. For Mary, Eric, and Mort coping style was characterized by a sense of self sufficiency, and an analytical approach to problems. Again there is some evidence that this approach was directly encouraged by their parents. For Eva, on the other hand, the uncertainty of her home situation appeared to produce a coping style that was characterized by an immediate turning to others for support and reassurance. These differences in coping styles also seemed to be largely reflected in the "style" of helping that developed later.

Perhaps because of their relatively more troubled backgrounds introspection appeared to be a more important dimension for Mort and Eva than for Eric and Mary. Stress in both family and peer backgrounds seemed to lead Mort and Eva into a certain amount of introspection in an attempt to explain the reasons for some of their difficulties. This was less a factor for Eric and Mary who reported more externally directed coping styles. Again some parallels were noted between this personal orientation and the coping style the helpers expected their helpees to develop.

In terms of early peer relationships, marginality was observed to have a strong effect in three of the four cases. In three cases, Mort, Mary, and Eva, the helping role de-

veloped significantly earlier than it did in Eric's case. These three helpers faced various challenges with various degrees of success, but a lasting outcome appeared to be fairly strong feelings of empathy and identification with others perceived to be in difficult situations. There is evidence to suggest that both Mort and Eva developed helping as a primary means of coping with their sense of marginality.

The presence of a critical event, or a single clear defined helping experience was apparent in the cases of Mary, Eric, and Mort. In contrast helping seemed to become a generalized mode of responding for Eva at a very early age.

In summary, parental identification emerged as a key influence on the helping role. This appeared to be the source of numerous additional developmental context dimensions. The nature of these dimensions determined the respondents' general orientation towards themselves and their environment. Peer interactions further shaped these original dimensions and generated additional sources of contextual influence. Analysis of these dimensions suggests that while some constants seem to be important that the significance of the developmental context in determining the helping role can vary widely. An additional indication was that seemingly oppositional influences (e.g., positive versus negative home environment) can both contribute to an informal helping role. The nature of these helping roles, however, can be quite different. This serves to illustrate the importance of consid-



ering both the interaction of contextual variables and the nature of the specific helping role under consideration.

Current context. Since in the present study setting developed as a point of constancy or control, it did not generate a large number of unique dimensions. The three dimensions that seemed most important were labeled density, security and constancy. Density refers to the high number of people living in close proximity. While this dimension was mentioned explicitly by Eric and Eva as influencing their helping roles, it seemed to be implicit in the other cases as well. Constancy refers to the similarity of the present setting to previous settings and this seemed most influential for Mary as she perceived her residence hall sharing some characteristics with her high school. Security seemed to be important for all respondents as they described their environment as comfortable, and non-threatening. This general sense of support conveyed by the setting appeared to enable the helpers to extend themselves to others. At times when the setting was perceived as more challenging as in Eva's and Mort's cases the frequency of helping declined.

Interpersonal dimensions observed to be influencing the helping role in the present context were labeled network growth, network separation, and peer support. The four helpers suggested four somewhat different variations of network growth. For Mary network growth seemed to be a continuance of an ongoing process of psychological growth. She se-

lected as friends persons she perceived as more skilled and mature than herself, incorporated these skills as best she could and tried to develop them in her helpees. Mort's network revealed some aspects of this process, but more marked influence came from his developing a much more stable network than he had before. This caused a reduction in the magnitude of his helping involvements but it also provided him with personal support which in turn helped him sustain his role. For Eric network growth was represented primarily by an increase in size, which increased both his opportunities for peer support and his chances of making helping contacts.

In Eva's case network growth was the least positive. She sought persons she saw as more skilled and she established support relationships, but these relationships appeared to be tenuous and unpredictable. Circumstances were such that she could not always make constructive use of input from others. In addition, while she was constantly expanding her network she was also continuously losing people. As long as she could continue this exchange process she could sustain her role, but if this process broke down as it appeared to be doing during the time of the interview then her ability to help others was also limited.

A related dimension was network separation, which refers to the helper's ability to make distinctions between "pure" helping relationships and more general and reciprocal relationships. Mary, Mort, and Eric had achieved a reasonably

sufficient degree of network separation so as to avoid role conflicts while this was not true for Eva. By creating dependencies in her helpees and by sending mixed messages about wanting and not wanting help she developed frequent role conflicts for herself.

Peer support was important since all helpers identified peers they could turn to for both personal and role support. Mary and Mort indicated that, given the nature of their role, peer support was a sufficient resource in dealing with role related problems, while both Eric and Eva either had used or would like to have available some form of supportive professional intervention.

Several of the dimensions that emerged in the developmental context were observed to have a continuing influence in relation to the personal context. Since they have been discussed previously they will only be reviewed briefly here. Empathy and identification continued to be important dimensions for Mary, Mort and Eva in initiating their roles. A sense of responsibility was a factor for all four respondents, but it appeared most marked for Mary and Eric. A strong appreciation of affiliation seemed to lead Mary and Mort into initiating situations, while a need for affiliation was stronger for Eva. Mary and Eric's more logical externally oriented coping style appeared to provide a certain goodness of fit between them and their helpers while the same was true for Mort and Eva with their more intuitive and introspective

coping style.

A final personal dimension that has been touched on but not elaborated previously is the sense of reward that was apparent in the helping situations. For Mary reward was represented by a sense of interest in and a learning from others. Mort and Eric implied that helping others was a significant means of improving their self worth. A similar aspect was evident in Eva's case, but to a much greater degree. She herself defined this as a "need to be needed."

The similarity in setting produced a limited range of setting dimensions. Analysis of the interpersonal context emphasized some dimensions that were suggested by the developmental context analysis, and provided the basis for constructing several additional dimensions. Analysis of the personal context provided considerable continuity with the developmental dimensions but illustrated how these dimensions had evolved to influence the helping role in the present form. In the following section the implications of the interactional variations among the major Developmental and Current Contexts as suggested by these four cases will be considered.

### Contextual Patterns in the Informal Helping Role

As the above discussion has already suggested, not only is the helping role influenced by the interaction among the individual context dimensions, but also by the differential impact of the major contexts themselves: developmental and



current setting, personal, and interpersonal context. This final section will illustrate two aspects of these patterns, context salience and context congruence.

Context salience. One of the two primary contextual qualities suggested by the four cases is that of context salience. This refers to the situation where a particular context--personal, interpersonal, setting--appears to have chief importance in determining the helping role. This can apply either to the original inception of the role, or it can apply to the role process as it exists in its current context. In considering the generative aspects of context salience the four cases reviewed suggested a process-reactive or history-situational distinction. Mort, Eva, and Mary with the early origins of their roles and the salient influence of the developmental context seem to clearly reflect a process development in their roles. Eric's profile, however, suggested a more reactive profile. While his role appeared to be somewhat influenced by the developmental context, the effect of the current context on his role seemed much more pronounced.

For those helpers where the developmental process seemed to be most salient, their helping appeared to be more integrated into their life style. They tended to be more active in initiating their role and seemed to try to tailor their role to their current context with varying degrees of success. For Eric, however, whose role developed largely in reaction to the current context, contextual influences appeared to

maximize his role satisfaction. The permanence of such reactive roles is uncertain, in that a change in setting might cause Eric's role to decrease. On the other hand, the reactive nature of his role suggests that it might be more flexible to adaptation to new settings, while the more process oriented respondents might try to adhere to their more internalized role and seek out aspects of a setting that could support it.

In considering context salience in terms of ongoing role process a different distinction emerges. This seems to be most accurately reflected in the differences between a need and a predisposition to help. In Eric's case his developmental context seemed to create a predisposition to help but he needed certain contextual stimuli in order to react. The special nature of his setting and of his position as counselor strongly facilitates his "community building" interests, thus he is actively involved.

Mary and Mort seemed somewhat balanced between predisposition and need. Their developmental context appeared to have generated fairly strong helping needs, but these needs seemed to be integrated sufficiently with their current context so as not to be an overriding factor in their helping. For Eva, however, the dominance of needs in her personal and interpersonal context strongly affected her role. The strength of these needs led her to be quite active in the initiation of her role, directive in her helping style, and

made her inclined to develop dependent helping relationships. As her case indicated the strength of these needs were the source of some rather severe role conflicts. It seemed likely that if these needs were not brought into perspective with the rest of her role context that her difficulties would continue or she would cease to be active in her helping role.

This brief discussion of context salience has suggested some ways in which the helping role can be greatly influenced by a single dimension. Such an analysis can provide an understanding of some of the dominant aspects of the individual role. However, the complete role cannot be understood without considering an interaction of all the major contexts.

Context congruence. Context congruence was the second of the two major context qualities suggested by the cases. This refers to the relative compatability of the various contexts in their impact on the helping role. Congruence can range from high to low with high congruence being preferable for developing an effective helping role. For all respondents congruence was fairly high. However, there were some suggestions of present minor conflicts and the possibility of greater incongruence in future settings. The respondents reported that when they were involved in their own personal concerns or problems it was at times difficult or at least inconvenient to meet helping requests. The setting and the interpersonal contexts were such that it was very difficult

to avoid being approached if someone was insistent in making a request. Although the helpers denied that this was much of a problem, it could be anticipated that during a final examination period when stress would be high for both helper and helpee, that personal concerns might conflict with the role.

Other examples of low context congruence were when Eva lived in a residence hall where she felt the students were too "radical" she felt uncomfortable and found it difficult to approach others, despite her strong needs to help others. Similarly Mort's role declined following his move to a new corridor until he was able to clear up some personal difficulties and to establish new relationships. Thus in examining the helping role it is important to consider factors of low contextual congruence that may hinder or block the helping role.

Perhaps because his role was reactive to the current context, Eric's role seemed to have the best "goodness of fit." He preferred a passive style and was involved in a balance of instrumental and nurturant situations. Both Mary and Mort's roles revealed a somewhat lower degree of congruence in that they indicated that they would like to become more involved, and to raise the visibility of their role, perhaps by becoming counselors. Although the current context did much to facilitate their role, the demands from their personal context were not completely consistent with



the actual extent of their role.

Although her role was in many ways maladaptive, congruence was very strong for Eva. In both her interpersonal and her helping style she needed a rather large supply of people because of the rapidity with which she seemed to change relationships and their relative importance to her. The high availability of people in her present setting was highly congruent with these needs. In a situation where fewer people were available, or more network stability was demanded, it is doubtful that her role could continue in its present form.

Examining the congruence of the contextual patterns of the helping role provides a perspective from which to understand not only the interactive effects of the various contexts in the present role, but also provides some probabilities as to the variations in role performance that will develop given future changes in the contextual influences.

Summary note. This section has been presented primarily as an illustration of how the interactional perspective might be applied to the analysis of role context. It is not being suggested that these are the only patterns that were important or useful in contrasting and interpreting the roles. Other analyses are equally possible. The point is that the interactional perspective appears to be a very valuable and informative way in which to conceptualize the informal helping process.

### Summary

The preceding discussion has illustrated the importance of considering the informal helping role in terms of an interactional context. Several dimensions were developed to explain the variables influencing role development within the various major contexts of personal, interpersonal, and setting correlates. Finally some of the major contextual patterns suggested by the case materials were reviewed. In emphasizing the interactional approach this analysis has illustrated how using any single construct or dimension might lead to an incomplete or a misleading understanding of the informal helping role. The final chapter will review the major aspects of this study and comment on their implications for future research and interventions from an interactional perspective.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has presented an exploratory, descriptive analysis of informal helpers and their activities. This investigation was organized around an interactional concept of complex behavior developed from work in both organizational and community psychology. This perspective suggests that complex behavior patterns, such as informal helping, can be understood in terms of a role, viewed as a function of an interaction of personal and environmental variables across time. A review of the existing literature revealed that there had been only limited development of this view of both informal helpers and the informal helping process. Thus a primary goal of the present study was to initiate an understanding of the activities of informal helpers in terms of role behavior and to define the key descriptive dimensions of this role. A second major goal was to define the context of this role in terms of major past and present personal and environmental variables. The third major goal was to examine the interaction among these context variables, to the extent possible, as they related to the development and process of the informal helping role. These primary goals were directed toward a more general goal which was to provide a generative base for developing both future research and designing preventive interventions with informal helpers.

### Review of the Analytical Framework Role Dimensions

Due to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the results, a conceptual review and analysis of the findings will be useful in judging the degree to which these goals have been satisfied. First a specific group of informal helpers was identified, based on a description of their helping activity in their natural setting. Analyses revealed that it was possible to define the activities of these informal helpers in terms of a role. Eleven major dimensions were observed to be most significant in characterizing the nature of this role. These dimensions were frequency, time span, content area, magnitude, degree of emergency, nature of support, breadth of skills, proximity of the help seeker, interpersonal (helper-helpee) relationships, method of initiation, and style of helping.

Development of these dimensions and comparison of their interrelationships proved to be a convenient framework for summarizing and comparing the role of the informal helpers in this study. A summary of the role as characterized by these dimensions is presented at the end of Chapter V. Since each of these dimensions were developed directly from the respondents' reports, each contributes some information concerning their helping role. In all instances, however, comparison of the prominent interrelationships of these dimensions greatly increased their information value.

For example frequency indicated that the helpers were



involved daily. Time span added a little more information by revealing that some situations involved less than an hour's time, while others could last several months. Content area revealed that while the majority of these helping situations were instrumental in nature, the helpers were also involved in several personal and interpersonal problems. The dimension of magnitude provided a means of gauging the size and complexity of these situations. On the other hand, degree of emergency was important only because it revealed that crisis intervention was not a significant aspect of this helping role. Only when the interrelationships of these dimensions were considered did a more complete sense of their role begin to emerge. Taken together the above dimensions revealed that this specific role involved daily helping with small instrumental favors and relatively frequent helping (i.e., every three to four weeks) with major interpersonal issues, with the time span of these major issues averaging one to two weeks.

While these basic or descriptive dimensions begin to provide a definite sense of the function of this particular role, the dimensions focusing on the nature of the helping response, the relationships between helper and helpee, and the dynamic process of the role provide additional depth of understanding as to how and why this role is put into operation. Nature of support reflected how these helpers provided both instrumental and emotional support. When this dimension was

considered in relation to other dimensions, it was discovered that while the helpers could respond to both instrumental and emotional needs, they had a preference for relying on emotional forms of support in most of their major personal and interpersonal situations. Although this was in part due to the fact that they wanted to avoid being blamed for a negative outcome to a helpee's situation, several of the helpers were aware that having the helpee make his or her own decisions was important as a means of increasing their coping skills.

Analysis of the helper's breadth of skills revealed that while several of them had specialty areas (e.g., sexual adjustment, race relations, medical problems, religious issues) their roles included helping with a variety of issues which required a general range of knowledge and interpersonal skills. Thus while a certain aspect of their role was represented by such specialty helping it was important to understand that they also had the capability of helping with a wide range of general issues. This dual aspect of the role might not have emerged unless the breadth of the helpees' skills had been considered in detail.

Two of the most interesting dimensions observed were the proximity and interpersonal dimensions. The proximity dimension, which evolved out of the social network analyses, revealed that while the majority of role situations involved persons in the immediate residential environment, a full third of the major helping situations involved helpees living

in cities up to 100 miles distant. Literature cited previously (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Wellman et al., 1971) suggested that due to high mobility and rapid communications such informal support relationships are more common than one might suspect. The discovery of the "long distance" helping aspects of this role, however, was quite exciting, because it suggested that the role was not bound to the specific setting but that it extended over a fairly broad geographic area. This suggested a much different helping role than one that was based on interpersonal contacts in a specific social setting.

The interpersonal dimension, which was also based on social network analysis, provided what seemed to be one of the most important aspects of this helping role. It revealed, as might be suspected, that the helpers gave most of their time and effort to their closest friends, but more importantly it indicated that the helpers provided support to a full range of their acquaintances. They often supplied instrumental assistance to distant acquaintances, while many of the their major helping situations involved friends of moderate acquaintance. It is probable that this helping throughout the full range of their social networks is one of the primary elements that led to their peer nomination as helpers. More importantly this finding raises the possibility that the role of this particular group of helpers provided a resource that was not generally available in their social setting.

Analysis of the initiation dimension produced a finding that seemed strongly related to the specific make-up of this particular group of identified helpers. About one half of the helpers held positions as floor counselors while the other half did not. Helpers who were not counselors favored an active-passive mode of initiating helping whereby they would either wait to be approached by a helpee, or at times they would facilitate a helping situation by asking leading questions. Helpers who were counselors, however, practiced a more consistently passive mode of initiation because, as they explained, so much of their time was already taken up by the instrumental and administrative requests related to their counselor role. Most of the helper-counselors were anticipating an end to their counselor role and a return to more autonomy in their informal helping. The role as characterized by this dimension was one where the helpers were not inclined to "rush in" or "take charge," but rather one where they occasionally facilitated an initiation, and where they most often made themselves "available" at a time deemed most appropriate by the helpee.

Style is the most broad and inclusive of the dimensions. A non-directive style of helping most clearly characterized the present role. Most of the respondents indicated that a primary function of their role was to provide a "safe" non-critical atmosphere in which the helpee could air his or her problems. Only a few respondents occasionally adopted a more



directive approach in which they assumed it was necessary for them to point out the helpee's "mistakes" or "misperceptions." Analysis of style again emphasized the "self help" aspect of this particular role. Most of the respondents tried to practice a style of helping that would encourage the helpee to improve his or her coping skills by having the helpee assume responsibility for the particular problems at hand. Providing a mechanism for the helpee to "work through" a problem rather than merely supplying advice or sympathy points to yet another aspect of this role that likely separates it from many of the support resources in this particular setting.

The role dimensions as developed in this study do provide a broad understanding of the informal helping role of this particular group of informal helpers. Some of the key aspects of this role were the emphasis on personal and interpersonal issues, an orientation that encouraged the helpee to assume responsibility for his or her own problems, the presence of long distance support relationships, and the provision of support in some form to a full range of social network members. The dimensions used to describe this present role could be applied to other helping roles in other settings. It is quite likely that such analyses would produce additional dimensions some of which might supersede those presented here. It is a major contention of this study, however, that for such comparative analyses to be productive,

there must be a clear understanding of the context which produced the role described by these dimensions. Thus the second major goal of this study was to define the context of this role in terms of major past and present personal and environmental variables.

The definition of the major contexts of the informal helping role was more thoroughly developed around the presentation of four specific cases. A summary and discussion of these cases produced two levels of contextual analysis. In the first step, descriptive context dimensions which seemed to most clearly characterize the role context of these four helpers were identified and compared. These context dimensions were considered to describe important aspects of the major role contexts (personal, interpersonal, and setting). The second level of analysis examined the interrelationships that were observed to exist among these major context dimensions. This illustrative and comparative analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the major contexts as they related to the roles of these particular helpers.

Discussion of the role context was broken down into two major components, developmental and current. For those helpers who reported an early role development (i.e., childhood or early adolescence), parental identification and peer marginality appeared to be two of the most influential context dimensions. Specific aspects of the parent child relationship appeared to create a set or orientation in the child to-

ward self and the environment. Later in the face of perceived peer rejection this "orientation" seemed to interact with the environment to produce a significant influence on the helping role. Not all of the dimensions previously noted in the description of this process will be reviewed again here. It is important, however, to recall some of the more prominent developmental dimensions.

Some of the most important dimensions which appeared to have their origins in parental identification included sanctioning, problem orientation, self expectation, affiliation, and introspection. Sanctioning of helping behavior usually resulted from the helper's observing a parent as a model or from a parent's encouraging an open discussion of problems. Problem orientation which refers to the helper's general approach to problems appeared to be positive in most instances. The helpers tended to view problems as challenges to be overcome rather than as situations to be avoided. This seemed to be essential in their helping of others to cope with problems. In some cases this positive orientation came from a general supportive and encouraging attitude on the part of the parents. Other helpers seemed to have developed this approach out of a necessity of overcoming problems in their home life.

A positive expectation towards one's self and one's progress also seemed to develop from a generally supportive home atmosphere. Satisfaction in the helping role seemed to be associated with this positive self-expectation and an inter-

est in encouraging similar expectations in the helpees. On the other hand, helpers who reported parental conflicts also tended to indicate uncertainty concerning their self-expectations. For some of these people their current helping seemed to be in part an attempt to gain validation from others to compensate for these uncertainties. This appeared to produce conflicts and dissatisfaction in their current role.

The affiliation dimension describes a parallel process. Early parental support and encouragement of interpersonal contacts led to later interests and attraction to people, which many of the helpers pointed to as a primary motivation in their helping role. Other helpers, however, recalled feeling rejected by one (though never both) parent. For them helping seemed to evolve in part as an attempt to develop a relationship with the rejecting parent. Later their role seemed to emerge from a similar use of helping as a means of gaining peer recognition.

For some helpers, introspection also seemed to be a developmental context dimension that had bearing on their current role. This appeared most evident for respondents who had faced significant problems in their early years (e.g., parental conflict, death of a parent, prolonged hospitalization). These helpers presented themselves as engaging in more self-exploration and reflection, a process which they also tended to encourage in their helpees. Helpers who had not faced such challenges tended to be more pragmatic and



goal oriented both toward themselves and their helpees.

For several of the helpers an experience of peer marginality emerged as the second major developmental context influencing the development of their helping role. For most of the helpers, the positive aspects of the dimensions just noted provided them with the resources to meet this challenge. Peer marginality was important in these cases, however, in that it seemed to produce the dimensions of empathy for and identification with troubled individuals which these helpers reported as a current role influence. For those helpers where the dimensions revealed a less supportive home background, the experience of peer marginality appeared to intensify helping as a means of meeting interpersonal needs. Helpers who incorporated this process into their current roles also experienced conflict in their roles.

A final developmental dimension that was present in several, but not all helper backgrounds, was that of a critical event. This was defined as some clearly defined helping experience that seemed to crystalize the helping role. For some it involved helping a particular group of friends, for others it was volunteer work, for still others significant helping relationships with one person stood out as most important. In all cases such an event appeared to make the helpers conscious of their helping skill and of the satisfactions that could be gained from such activities.

It was important to consider these developmental dimen-

sions because not only did they suggest some commonality of influences that produced the role of this particular group of helpers, but they also illustrated how variations in the developmental experience could affect current role activity. Dimensions describing the current context yielded a similar sense of a commonality of influences that produced the basic role, while variations along these dimensions were reflected in variations of the roles of the individual helpers.

A review of the helper's perceptions of their current setting produced two primary dimensions which seemed to be important in nearly every case. These were setting density and setting security. Density refers to the fact that most of the helpers reported that the large number of people available in their setting facilitated their helping role. Density alone was not enough, because the helpers reported that "safe" and comfortable atmosphere of their setting, described here as setting security, was also important in influencing their role. The helping role tended to decline for those helpers who experienced a decrease in security. It appeared that they needed to be at ease in their setting before they could extend themselves to help others.

Primary interpersonal context dimensions that appeared to influence the helping role were network growth, network separation, and peer support. Network growth refers to the process by which the helpers developed and expanded their network of interpersonal relationships. At least three major

variations were observed. For some network growth appeared to be a part of their own psychological growth. They made friends with people they perceived to have positive personality characteristics that they wished to acquire. In turn these helpers seemed to be frequently involved in helping others with similar aspects of their personal development.

For other helpers network growth indicated a direct building and expanding of a social network that had been previously limited in size or quality. This seemed to facilitate their helping role in that it brought them into contact with more people. These additional personal contacts increased the probability of helping contacts, but they also provided additional sources of both role and personal support for the helper.

For other helpers, network growth revealed a more non-productive process. The network was constantly in flux with old members being dropped and new members added on with no marked progress toward stability. For these helpers, their role was often used as part of the recruitment process. This tended to be a frequent source of role conflict for these people because of differing expectations between them and their helpees.

Network separation is a related dimension. It suggested that it was important for these helpers to keep a fairly clear separation between reciprocal helping relationships with friends, and their unilateral helping relationships with

helpees. Those few helpers who could not do this found it difficult to terminate helping relationships and the helpee would often make more demands than they were willing to meet.

Peer support is a fairly straightforward but very important dimension. All the helpers indicated that a key factor in sustaining their roles was the availability of personal and role support from friends.

Of the current important personal contextual dimensions, empathy, identification, and affiliation, all noted previously as developmental dimensions, were considered by several of the respondents to be significant influences in their current role. Additional factors were a sense of responsibility, coping style, and sense of reward. Nearly all of the helpers reported feeling some sense of responsibility toward others in need. For the most part this was not indiscriminate, but it seemed to apply only when the helper believed he or she had the ability to help a person with a particular problem.

The helpers' own coping style seemed to parallel their expectations for coping in their helpees. Those helpers who tended to be independent, pragmatic, and goal directed in their own coping style tended to encourage the same approach in their helpees. Those who emphasized introspection in search of psychological explanations directed their helping toward similar goals.

All of the helpers indicated that there was a definite



sense of reward related to their helping role. For some reward came as an opportunity to learn from and about others. For most, helping, to one degree or another, provided a means of improving self esteem. For a few, as has been suggested by several of the previous dimensions, the reward of satisfying interpersonal needs had become the primary motivation for helping. As it has been suggested before, this appeared to be a primary source of role conflicts.

Both the developmental and current context dimensions illustrated the nature and interrelationships of role influences that were observed within each of the major contexts. An examination of the relationships among the major contexts (developmental, and current: setting, personal, and interpersonal), suggested the two principal contextual qualities of context salience and context congruence. Context salience refers to the observation that the helpers differed in terms of which context seemed to be most important in determining their helping role. For many there seemed to be a process of gradual evolution in their roles in which the developmental context was most important. These helpers appeared to be more active in initiating their role involvements, and their helping activity seemed to be integrated more fully with their general life style. Helpers where the current context was most salient suggested a reactive origin to their role. That is, that their role developed in reaction to influences from their current context.

A primary distinction that was suggested by context salience was that when the negative aspects of developmental dimensions remained prominent the helper tended to experience frequent role conflicts because of interference from personal needs. The presence of both positive developmental and current contextual influences produced a much more stable role, although it too was subject to variations in the current context. Roles that developed most in reaction to the current context in many ways appeared to be the most consistent because they were the least influenced by helping experiences in previous settings. However, it is uncertain if these latter roles would be sustained if the current role context were to change.

The second of the two major contextual patterns observed was context congruence, which refers to the compatibility of the influences of the various contexts. Context congruence was fairly high for all of the helpers. At times when context congruence was low, such as when the helpers experienced stress in their setting or interpersonal context their helping role was usually sharply reduced. For some helpers the high availability of people in their current setting provided a context congruence that encouraged the continuation of rather maladaptive roles based on personal needs. For most helpers, however, there seemed to be a high congruence between developmental and current contextual influences that served to maximize an appropriate functioning of their roles.

As the review of these contextual dimensions and patterns has shown, the analytical framework developed here did meet the objectives of depicting the complex personal, interpersonal, and setting variables that influenced the helping role of a specific group of identified helpers. This approach provided a sense of the dynamic evolution of several key aspects of this role. It was possible to identify role influences that were common to the experience of most of the helpers while it was also possible to isolate specific aspects of these dimensions which seemed to produce differences among the roles of the individual helpers. It is believed that a similar comprehensive analytical framework could be usefully applied to investigating the contexts of a variety of informal helping roles.

### Limitations of the Study

Before considering any general implications, however, it is important to place the present findings in perspective. First, the results are based on illustration and example thus they are fairly speculative in nature. No control group was used to develop comparative explorations of the various dimensions. The use of individual self-report, while providing a rich source of information which was essential in interpreting the complexity of variables involved, introduces certain limits. For example, no completely objective statement of the helpers' effectiveness was obtained. It is my subjective

judgment, however, that the peer nominations, the extensive screening of the respondents, and the detailed helping examples that they reported provided an acceptable basis for this judgment. Similarly there were few cross checks available on statements concerning interpersonal relationships. Again I believe that the number of relationships which the respondents reported and the depth to which they discussed them provide a sufficient basis for making statements concerning the interpersonal context.

An additional problem lies in the fact that not all of the contexts were equally developed. There was much more detail available concerning the developmental and interpersonal contexts than there was concerning the setting contexts. The setting in this instance may, in fact, have had a more limited influence but three aspects of the study caution against making such a judgment. Most importantly the setting was just not that differentiated for the respondent group. Thus unique contributions of the setting to their role were difficult to judge. Secondly my questions relating to the setting were somewhat less detailed than those relating to the other contexts. Finally the helpers seemed to be much more adept at describing their personal histories and their friendships than they were at describing their setting. It seems that either an objective measure of setting influences or a questionnaire that would help respondents make more definitive statements about setting variables would be advisable in fu-



ture research.

A final major point to be made here is that the helpers in this study were a highly congruent group. They were all college students living in residence halls. Thus they were living in close proximity to numerous peers who were quite similar to themselves. As college students they were living in a very clearly defined yet transitory period in their lives. In relation to the general population they represent a highly verbal, sophisticated, and educated group of helpers. They were clearly oriented toward talking as a means of providing answers to problems. All of these factors obviously contribute to a fairly socialized helping role. However, it has never been argued that these helpers and their role are representative of any larger population. What is being argued is that the analytical process used in this study can be used to define the role of informal helpers and to illustrate the complex relationships that exist between this role and its context.

#### Directions for More General Applications

This has been an initial formulation of a model that could be applied to the analysis of helping roles in other contexts. At this juncture it cannot be determined how complete the present framework and its dimensions actually are. Undoubtably the application of this approach to other roles in other settings would produce additional important dimen-

sions, whereas some of the present dimensions might prove to be less useful in describing the relationships between these other roles and their contexts. On the other hand, several of the dimensions developed here might prove to be congruent with important aspects of other roles. These questions await future research. However, the existing interactional research cited earlier offers some basis for testing out the adequacy of the present model and for illustrating what other dimensions might emerge.

Two studies that are most important in this respect are London's (1970) study of Christians who helped Jews escape Nazi Germany, and Rosenhan's (1970) study of civil rights workers. London does not provide a detailed description of the helping role in terms of dimensions, but it might be assumed that this role differed from the one in the present study in that degree of emergency was much greater, a dimension of danger was very prominent, and that direct instrumental action was probably more important than talking through issues or providing emotional support. Thus while the two roles are quite different the present framework could be used to describe both roles by emphasizing different aspects of existing and developing additional dimensions as necessary.

Similarly London's description of the role context was limited to one developmental and two personal context dimensions. It will be recalled that he found that his helpers had a strong moral identification with at least one parent,

that they perceived themselves to be socially marginal, and that they seemed to have a strong sense of adventure. These findings offer some interesting comparisons with the present results. Both London's helpers and the college student helpers reported a strong parental identification. London emphasized the moral aspects of this identification. While this seemed to be an important aspect of the identification for the helpers in the present study, several additional dimensions (e.g., sanctioning, problem orientation, self expectation) were also observed to be related to this strong parental identification. Sense of marginality in the present study referred primarily to the helpers' specific past experiences with their peers, while London's social marginality suggests a sense of isolation from society as a whole. Finally, the very different nature of the role investigated by London is consistent with his finding of sense of adventure as an important role context, while in the present study almost the reverse seemed to be true. For the present helpers dimensions of peer support and setting security seemed more important to their role than did a sense of adventure. This illustration of how the present framework can be used to generate a commonality of understanding between two such disparate roles and contexts suggests that it could provide a significant basis for providing a more general understanding of helpers and their roles.

A similar comparative illustration can be developed with

Rosenhan's (1970) study. While his helper group is more similar to the present one, being highly educated, white Americans, the role again is quite different. Extended commitment to the civil rights movement involved a certain focus of role and certainly contained a higher element of risk than was experienced by the helpers in the present study. Still certain parallels exist. Rosenhan found that civil rights workers with the strongest commitments also reported strong and lasting parental identifications. They had a strong socialization to action as well as ethical values, and they tended to talk less about their social concerns and self importance than helpers who were less committed.

The first two of these dimensions are quite similar to context dimensions noted in the present study. Both groups of helpers reported strong and lasting parental identifications. "Socialization to action" in the present group was represented by a variety of dimensions including positive problem orientation, sense of responsibility, positive self expectations, sanctioning of helping, and coping style. While the lack of a control group makes it difficult to identify a parallel to the third dimension in the present group, there is some room for speculation. Helpers in the present study tended to define their helping as "something anybody would do" or something that was "natural" and did not offer elaborate social justifications. The comparison of these two studies suggests that the present framework



might be used to more clearly identify the contextual differences separating people actively involved in helping and those who primarily engage in socially desirable discussion and fantasy.

A third study which offers some insights into applications of the present framework is Shapiro's (1971) description of life in a New York welfare hotel. She alludes to helpers only briefly in the broader context of her study, but some sense of their role in comparison to the role in the present study can be developed. Helpers in the welfare hotel also provided emotional and verbal supports, but in addition they were much more involved in instrumental activities such as cooking for others or helping them cope with various aspects of the welfare bureaucracy. An additional similarity between the student helping role and the welfare helping role is that they both involved a day-to-day helping over a range of issues. This is quite different from the high-risk-focused helping role reported in the London and Rosenhan studies. Contexts of the college and welfare helpers role were both similar in that they both arose from a setting where several peers lived in close proximity, yet certain developmental and personal dimensions of these roles were likely quite different. Shapiro's report supplies insufficient data for detailed comparisons, however, the information that she does provide suggests that it would be feasible to make a comprehensive study of this helping role and its context by applying

the present analytical framework.

It should be recalled that a testing of the analytical approach developed here was not a goal of the study. The intent was to see if the framework could be applied to defining the complex relationships between role and context for one specific group of helpers. Thus the above examples are not offered as a "test" of the generalizability of the model, but rather they provide helpful illustrations of how the results of various studies can be compared in terms of the framework that was developed here. These brief examples suggest that there may be some consistency in certain dimensions such as parental identification, sense of marginality, and positive problem orientation (socialization to action). On the other hand these same studies also suggest additional role dimensions (danger or risk) and context dimensions (sense of adventure). Future research which more directly tests the assumptions of the present approach is needed before definitive statements concerning its validity and reliability can be made.

The final two sections of this chapter will briefly discuss the implications of the present analytical approach for developing future research and for implementing preventive community interventions with informal helpers.

#### Implications for Further Research

The most important implication of the present work for

future research is that it provides a more integrated framework for research and analysis of helping roles and their contexts than has existed before. It provides a beginning outline for a systematic investigation of what is a highly complex and often subtle aspect of human behavior.

The discussion in the preceding section has already provided some illustrations of how the role and contextual dimensions developed here might provide useful reference points for developing a comparative understanding of other helping roles in other contexts. While both London's (1970) and Rosenhan's (1970) make important contributions toward understanding the helping role in terms of an interactional framework, the present study suggests a more comprehensive approach that may prove to be useful in general applications. In addition London and Rosenhan had the advantage of investigating helping roles which could be fairly easily identified by an outside observer. The present study, however, suggests a means by which helping roles that are imbedded in the daily flow of events in a natural setting can be identified and their contextual influences described. This means that if the present approach proves to be successful it would greatly increase the range of helping roles and contexts that could be investigated and compared.

As was illustrated in the review in Chapter II, the existing literature on informal helpers and informal helping behavior provides a more limited assessment of the interrela-

tionships between the informal helping role and its context than does the approach used in the present study. Some of the most useful of these previous studies have been the work of London (1970) and Rosenhan (1970) cited previously. Other work, based on a more narrow focus, has been less informative. The most focused of these studies, such as those which attempted to prove the importance of a single antecedent (e.g., trait research) were the least informative. Investigations of situational state effects including the work on social models did produce some findings that may be related to the parental identification and sanctioning dimensions noted in the present study. However, these studies failed to integrate their results into the environmental and personal contexts of their subjects.

Most of the studies that dealt directly with informal helpers (e.g., Dana et al., 1973; Silverman, 1969; 1970; Lieberman, 1965) provided useful insights into the activities of these particular informal helpers, but they did not suggest a general framework whereby the activities of these helpers could be compared to those of helpers in other settings. The present study is an initial attempt to combine the principles of interactional research, such as that of London and Rosenhan, with the principles of the social systems research (e.g., McKinly, 1973; Mitchell, 1971; Todd, 1971; Wellman et al., 1971) into a comprehensive understanding of the helping roles and its context. At this juncture



the emphasis must be on the words initial attempt. Questions that must be pursued in future research include the feasibility of general application to other roles and contexts, more sophisticated understanding of setting dimensions, a more systematic appraisal of the influence of social network structure, improved measures of the effectiveness of the helping role, and a much more extended development of the interactional analysis.

Given these qualifications, the present study does suggest answers to some of the questions related to the general application of the present analytical framework. Comparisons with existing interactional research on informal helping roles have produced some interesting insights and possibilities. I think, however, before confidence can be developed in more general comparisons, that the validity of the unique qualities of helpers will have to be carefully checked. A reasonable way to approach this would be to apply the same analytical process to a group of identified helpers and a group of randomly selected individuals from the same setting. If contextual dimensions could be established that clearly distinguished between the identified helpers and the randomly selected group, this would offer substantial support for a more general application of the present approach.

I have already discussed the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the development of the helping role in a given setting. The present study revealed that the setting

seemed to be a primary catalyst for initiating some of the helping roles, yet these mechanisms could be described only in fairly general terms. Future research should concentrate on refining the understanding of the relationship between setting and role development. Three ways this might be accomplished are a more detailed interviewing of the respondents, independent observations of the setting, and, perhaps most importantly, an investigation of a variety of settings. Questions that would be important to consider include: do people with a "predisposition" to help seek out settings that are likely to support their role, or are there definite aspects of certain settings that create a predisposition to help in people who otherwise would not be involved? Such questions are quite basic to the goal of developing preventive interventions based on informal helping patterns.

The present study used social network concepts to obtain in depth understanding of the qualitative aspects of the helper's interpersonal relationships. For the present study this approach proved to be more productive than the more quantitative measures of network structure such as density and range which have been used to great effectiveness by others (e.g., Wellman et al., 1971, Craven & Wellman, 1973; Lauman, 1973). A trade-off has been made in these two approaches. While the present study obtained a very clear picture of the quality of the helper's relationships throughout a full range of their network, the other approaches in us-

ing a smaller number of network members obtained a more standardized measure of their respondents' network as a system. A logical way to extend this social network analysis would be to combine both approaches. In-depth interviewing could still be used to provide a sense of relationship quality, but quantitative measures would reveal more clearly how these relationships interact as a system to influence the helping role. Such a combined approach of examining qualitative aspects in-depth and obtaining quantitative measures of systems influences would provide a very substantial base for comparing interpersonal contexts of helping roles.

Improved assessment of the effectiveness of the helping role poses some serious, although not insurmountable, ethical and procedural questions. A most obvious procedure would be to interview helpees and have them discuss or rate helper effectiveness. It is questionable, however, whether this intrusion into the informal helping relationship would be worth the information. Objective measures would also be difficult to establish, e.g., a rating of how much a certain contact really helped to solve a problem, or how long did the "effects" of the help actually last. What criteria could be established to determine if the persons coping actually improved?

I believe that the optimal approach to measuring role effectiveness would be to expand on procedures already developed in the present study. Peer identification, and

screening of both nominee and nominator seemed to be quite effective. In addition, the present study was carried out over a relatively brief period of time. I suggest that future work be carried out over a longer period of time (e.g., 6 months to a year) and that periodic follow-up interviews be carried out. In addition helpers could be asked to keep a brief log. This would provide a means for determining how many helping contacts the helper had for a given period of time. It would also indicate how many different people came for help and whether or not the same people kept returning for support concerning the same basic problems. This process is not without its dangers in that it would certainly raise the helper's consciousness about improving his or her role. However, if this was preceded by careful interviewing it seems probable that it could broaden the effectiveness measures already available in the present study.

The final implication for future research listed above was the need for continued development of the interactional analysis of the helping role and its context. With more sophisticated and systematic analyses of the major personal and environmental contexts will come an improved understanding of the contextual patterns that exist among these major contexts. This is not to say that all future research in this area should be at the level of naturalistic systems analysis. Controlled laboratory research is also essential to unraveling these issues. The present work suggests, however, that



it is important for all findings, regardless of their source, to be interpreted in terms of their multiple and interacting contexts.

### Implications for Intervention

An explicit assumption throughout this study has been that informal helpers provide a valuable community resource. This study has demonstrated how such persons might be identified and how a systematic understanding of their role and its context could be achieved. I believe that preventive interventions based on supportive professional contacts with informal helpers could be an important means of improving the support resources of a given community. Since a primary key to preventive intervention is a thorough understanding of the personal and environmental variables involved, the analytical framework developed here could be of assistance to anyone intending to develop an effective working relationship with informal helpers.

There is some limited, but quite intriguing evidence which illustrates how informal helpers can successfully integrate into a community intervention process. Reports by Collins, Emlen, and Watson (1969) and Collins (1973) outline a program in which social workers were used as consultants to women who were called "day care neighbors." These were women who provided informal day care services and who actively recruited friends and neighbors to supply help seekers when

they could not supply the services themselves. The social worker consultants helped these day care neighbors deal with such issues as child abuse, multiproblem families, and with their own attitudes of acceptance or rejection toward help seekers or providers. The impact of such a program is emphasized in Collins' noting that the average day care neighbor had contact with fifty to seventy five families. Thus a consultant working with fifteen "neighbors" could have an influence on as many as 750 families.

In her expanded discussion of the consultant-neighbor relationships, Collins (1973) highlights many of the important aspects of this interaction. In this article she goes beyond the specific discussion of the "day care neighbors" and coins the more general term of "natural neighbors." Her use of the term natural neighbor is analogous to the term informal helper in the present study. Collins also argues that "natural neighbors" are a valuable community resource and that they could be usefully integrated into preventive community intervention.

Based on her experience with the day care neighbor program she points out that the scheduling of meetings between the helper and consultant and the helpee is likely to be irregular and unpredictable. There are likely to be frequent telephone calls reporting both "success" and "failures." Collins emphasizes the importance of maintaining a "colleagial" approach and of avoiding formal training procedures.

She argues that by definition "natural neighbors" are skilled in their activity and they know more about many of the important aspects of their system than does the consultant. She recommends individual over group consultation because it preserves the "confidential relationship." Finally Collins notes that consultation contact with natural neighbors does not have to come under the sponsorship of an agency, but that individual care-giving professionals can establish their own contacts with natural neighbors (i.e., informal helpers) in the course of their regular work.

I am in strong agreement with much of what Collins has suggested. There is, however, one significant point where I take issue. Collins argues that the consultant should focus only on "consultee" problems and not interfere in the helper's "system." It is true that the helper is more familiar with the various aspects of his or her environment than is the consultant. It is also true that it would be important for the consultant not to disrupt the balance of that "system." The present study has illustrated, however, how a variety of contextual variables can influence the helper's role. To ignore or to avoid these influences could severely limit the effectiveness of the helper-consultant relationship.

This does not suggest the consultant should unilaterally engineer significant changes in the role or role context of the helper. Rather I believe that both the consultant and

the helper could use the analytical approach that has been described here to better understand the nature of the helper's role and its important contextual influences. The application of an interactional analysis of the helper's role and context would need to be a mutual project where both the consultant and the helper would have to agree on a problem area and then decide on a means for change. In spirit I am in total agreement with Collins, but I believe that a systematic analysis of role and context provides a much more effective means for developing a supportive consultation with informal helpers. In providing both helper and consultant with a complete systems view of the helping role and its context, the interactional approach could help identify sources of role conflict that could easily go unidentified or be misinterpreted in an analysis of more limited scope.

While many of the respondents in the present study indicated a preference for relying on informal sources for role support, nearly all said they either had made use of a professional resource or that they would if they believed they could not cope with a helping situation by using their own resources. In recalling the four cases that were presented in detail, it can be illustrated how an interactional-based consultation might produce very different consultation goals for each of these helpers. For example, several of the context dimensions pertaining to Eva's role suggested that her strong interpersonal needs might be the source of many of her



role conflicts. Eva herself reported that the interview process alone had helped her label many of these issues for the first time. If Eva were to continue to explore these issues with a consultant it is likely that many of these problems could be reduced and that she could achieve an integration of helping role and life style that would maximize her many strong helping skills.

The objectives of consultation are perhaps most clearly defined in Eva's case, because she was experiencing the most role dissatisfaction at the time of the interviews. However, consultation issues can be identified in the other cases as well. Eric indicated a very strong interest in expanding his helping in community related issues. Since the present analysis suggested that his role evolved primarily out of his current context, consultation could be directed toward identifying what aspects of that setting he could draw upon to expand a community-oriented informal helping role. Both Mary and Mort indicated they would like to increase the frequency of their role involvements. Consultation might offer them an opportunity to explore their initiation style and their interpersonal context in detail in order to identify means for expanding their role. More specifically in Mort's case a consultant might have provided the support necessary for him to re-establish his helping role more quickly when he moved to his new residential setting. As these examples suggest, the goal of such consultation would be to enhance ra-

ther than change the helper's existing role.

Consultation has been offered as only one example of how informal helpers might be integrated into a program of community intervention. Depending on the role and the setting, group support or a support network of informal helpers might be more appropriate. Under such a system informal helpers in a given community might be put in touch with each other so that they might draw on one another for the purposes of role support. In other instances they might refer a help seeker to another informal helper who was more skilled in dealing with certain issues than they were themselves. Collins' cautionary note is well-advised here, in that the informal helper-helpee relationship is a fragile one. Any move toward groups or organization would have to involve extreme discretion so as to avoid violating the privacy of both the helper and the helpee. At this point I am in agreement with Collins, that an individual consultation model seems most appropriate.

Regardless of the form an intervention takes, the importance of the interactional perspective is that it provides a more systematic understanding of the informal helping role and its context than has previously existed. The use of this analytical framework provides a dynamic understanding of past and current role contexts. In addition to enhancing the individual helper-consultant relationship, such information might eventually be used to develop systems interventions

that would facilitate informal helping in a given community. In either case we can only benefit from an increased understanding of the informal helping resources that exist in our midst.

### Concluding Note

It is significant to remember that informal helpers as they appeared in the present study were in many ways not unusual or unique persons. They were not charismatic leaders or "angels of mercy." They did not possess some outstanding personality feature or exhibit some higher moral wisdom. They were not always the first to volunteer or the first to organize for change. In appearance and abilities they were in most ways typical of their community. It is this very typicalness that is the strength of their role. Their role was one of low profile that developed from the natural interactions of their environment. In this capacity they provided a coping resource that no professional service could match. Yet it is also their unremarkable position that makes analysis difficult, and perhaps explains why so obvious a resource has received so little systematic attention. The origins of their activity are imbedded in the complexities of day-to-day living. The present paper is based on the assumption that we need to continually refine our ability to understand and interpret complex functional behaviors, for therein lies a primary resource for improving the general human condition.

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- M      Paul
- N      Sara
- O      Gil
- P      Betsy
- Q      Alan
- R      Cindy

## APPENDIX A

Helper Nomination Survey

PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR COUNSELOR OR HEAD OF RESIDENCE BY  
MARCH 1ST.

Instructions: Please mark your answers directly on this  
sheet. BE SURE TO COMPLETE PART I.

I. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Major \_\_\_\_\_ Student No. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of semesters you have lived in this dorm (including present semester) \_\_\_\_\_

II. I am interested in "helpers." These are people who are especially willing to offer assistance to others in difficult situations such as having a troublesome issue to resolve or a large or difficult task to complete. At times many of us have faced such situations and we found a helper in a family member, friend or neighbor. Often this person was able to hear us out, give us some advice, do something directly for us, or was able to direct us to someone who could help us further.

My goal is to achieve a better understanding of helpers. To do this I would like to talk to them directly. In the space below please indicate the name of anyone who has been especially helpful to you, or who frequently takes time to be helpful to others. If you consider yourself to be such a person be sure to include your own name as well. This survey is part of a graduate research project. If you would like to know more about the survey before you answer these questions, see the last page.

1. People that I know that seem very much like helpers.

|             |                           |   |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|
|             |                           | Relationship to You<br>(friend, family, faculty<br>Univ. staff, clergy, etc.) |
| <u>Name</u> | <u>Address (if known)</u> |   |

2. People that I know that seem somewhat like helpers.

|             |                           |   |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|
|             |                           | Relationship to You<br>(friend, family, faculty<br>Univ. staff, clergy, etc.) |
| <u>Name</u> | <u>Address (if known)</u> |   |

## Additional Information

### Procedure of This Project

I shall contact some of the people who on the first page are identified as helpers. I will explain to them that I received their names through this survey. Unless you indicate otherwise, they will not be told who supplied their name. When I contact them I will ask them if they would be willing to talk to me about their role as a helping person. After talking to several helpers I will look at the information I have gathered to see if I can determine any general patterns among helpers and their roles.

### Purpose of This Project

I believe that people who are naturally helpful are an important part of any community. They frequently help others with problem situations that develop in everyday living. Yet beyond a few basic principles we do not know how or why some people are more helpful than others. One of the best ways to understand people is to talk to them. Thus I would like to talk to helpers in order to better understand their role in a natural setting. Hopefully what is learned here will suggest ways in which a community might more fully benefit from its natural helpers. Eventually it is hoped that this knowledge can be applied to both college and non-college communities. More immediately, however, the goal is to achieve a better understanding of helpers in a university setting,

If you have any additional thoughts about the specific helpers that you have identified, or of helpers and the helping process in general, please include your comments below.



## APPENDIX B

Nominator Telephone Screening Interview

This is David Walker calling. I sent around the helper survey that you filled out a few weeks ago. I've been talking to several of the people who mentioned others as helpers, and I'm hoping you would be willing to take a few minutes now to talk about the survey.

1. First I wanted to check with you. I may be calling some of the people in this dorm that you named as being helpers. Would it be o.k. if I used your name when I talked to them?
2. Considering the person(s) in your dorm that you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_, How would you describe the kind of helping role they are involved in?
3. Would you say that s/he is generally helpful to a lot of people?
4. How well would you say that you know this person?
5. (If counselor) Would you say that s/he does things aside from counselor duties that are helpful?
6. These are all the questions that I have. Now do you have any that you would like to ask me about the survey or what I am doing?

OK. Thanks for your cooperation.

## APPENDIX C

Nominee Telephone Screening Interview

This is David Walker calling. I sent around a survey on helping behavior in your dormitory a few weeks ago. I'm contacting several of the people who were mentioned as being helpers and your name was included as being a helping person. I'm hoping that you would be willing to take a few minutes now to talk to me about your reactions to this.

1. Were you aware that anybody had mentioned your name as being a helping person?
2. How do you see yourself in the helping role?
3. Would you say that you get involved in helping situations with a variety of people, or do you mostly help those who are good friends?
4. (If Counselor) Do you find yourself being involved in helping activities that go beyond your role as counselor?
5. Those are all the questions that I have at this time. Do you have any to ask me concerning the survey or what I am doing?
6. I may want to talk with you some more at a later time. Would that be OK? Thank you for your cooperation.



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*<sup>203</sup>  
*University of Massachusetts*

*Amherst 01002*

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

APPENDIX D

March 25, 1974

University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

Dear

I am contacting some of the people, such as yourself, who were mentioned as being helpers on the Helper Survey, with the hope of talking to them in more detail about their helping role. I would very much like to include you as one of the helping persons with whom I will be talking. Our discussion would include questions similar to those that I asked you over the telephone. Topics would cover what it is like living in your dormitory, what it is like to be a helping person, and how your present situation makes it possible for you to be helpful to others. I would also be interested in checking to see if you might know of any ways that helpers such as yourself could be assisted, supported, or backed up in the types of helping that you do. No tests or trick questions are involved, rather I am interested in having you tell me about your ideas and experiences in your own words.

The time involved would be arranged to fit your schedule. I would expect our meeting to last about one hour, however, if you wished to spend more time I would certainly be willing to do so. Meeting times will be arranged at your convenience since my schedule permits either day or evening times.

I shall be calling you soon to see if we could arrange a time to get together. This is part of my dissertation research, and it is not connected to the University or the residence halls in any official capacity. All information will be kept anonymous or will be reported only in general terms. This is purely voluntary on your part and I think you will find it interesting. By talking to several people such as yourself I hope to achieve a better understanding of how and why people help each other in

informal situations. In addition I hope to see there are ways that more people could be encouraged to be helpful to others and to see there are ways that people who are presently helping others could be supported in their activities.

If you have any questions please call me at 545-0041.

Sincerely,

David Walker  
145 Tobin Hall

DW:jeb



## APPENDIX E

Helper Role Interview

HI/SF

I would like to tape record our discussion if it's ok with you. Otherwise I might miss things that you say. Also taping will help me remember things later on. As I have said before, all the information will be anonymous or will be reported only in general terms. Also the tapes will be erased as soon as I am through with them.

As I said before I am doing this project for my dissertation. Also, I might add that I happened to do this survey in Southwest because I worked here a few years ago and thus I have some familiarity with the area. As I have explained before, I'm trying to look at how different people get involved in helping others. Since your name was given to me through the survey and because of our phone conversation I decided that I would like to talk to you some more about the kinds of helping that you do.

Some of the questions may seem to not apply to you or may be difficult to answer. However, I am trying to ask everyone pretty much the same questions so that I will be able to compare the information in the end. Any time you want to ask a question or don't understand something, feel free to interrupt.

Any questions before we begin? OK.

First I'd like to fill in some basic information.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time in Dorm \_\_\_\_\_ Time on Corridor \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_  
 Position in Dorm \_\_\_\_\_ Corridor Size \_\_\_\_\_  
 Room Location \_\_\_\_\_ Religious Preference \_\_\_\_\_

Now I'd like to continue with the main questions. To start I'd like to review just a bit where we left off on the phone.

1. What were your reactions to being mentioned as a helping person?

2. How do you think of yourself in the helping role?
3. Why do you think you get involved in helping others?
4. What type of helping situations do you frequently find yourself in?
5. How would you say you get involved in them?
6. What do you usually do in such situations?
7. Could we take one or two of these situations and talk about them a little more as examples? I'm not interested in names here, but just how well you know the person.
  - a. How did the situation come about?
  - b. Who made the first contact?
  - c. Can you say how you decided to do what you did?
  - d. How did things seem to end up?
  - e. Have you been able to help that person in other ways?
  - f. Have they ever been able to help you?
8. Do you have some ideas as to why someone mentioned you in the survey?
  - a. The person(s) who mentioned you is(are)\_\_\_\_\_. Can you suggest why they might have put your name down?
  - b. How well would you say that you know them?
9. (optional) In general do you have any other thoughts on the helping process and how and why people are able to help each other?

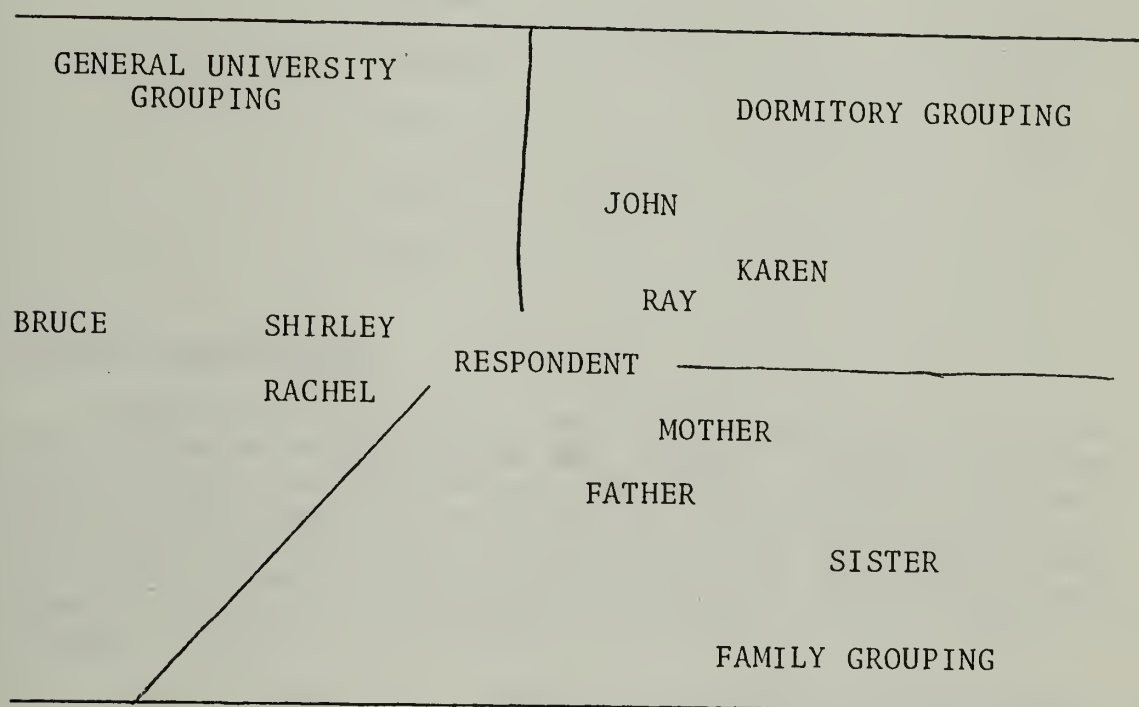
Do you have any idea why some people seem to be more helpful than others?
10. Now I'd like to talk briefly about some of the other things that you are involved in and that interest you.
  - a. What would you say your chief interests are?
  - b. What things do you consider as important to you?
  - c. Where do you see yourself headed in life?

## Summary and Concluding Comments:

## APPENDIX F

Example of a Social NetworkSocial Network Map

The social network map and the density matrix presented below are not based on any of the data obtained in this study. They are offered merely as simplified examples of both the maps and the matrices that were developed by the present respondents.

Sample Density Matrix

A matrix is constructed by listing all of the names presented on the social network map down the left hand column and across the top row of the matrix. It is essential that these two lists be in identical sequential order. At the intersection of each set of two names an X is recorded if the respondents believe that these two network members are acquainted. A 0 is recorded if the respondent believes the two people are not acquainted. The square is left blank if the respondent is uncertain. The matrix provides a graphic picture of number of acquaintanceships or links that exist between network members.



|         | John | Ray | Karen | Mother | Father | Sister | Shirley | Rachel | Bruce |
|---------|------|-----|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
| John    |      | X   | 0     | 0      | 0      | 0      | X       | X      | 0     |
| Ray     |      |     | 0     | 0      | 0      | 0      | X       | X      | 0     |
| Karen   |      |     |       | X      | X      | X      | 0       | 0      | X     |
| Mother  |      |     |       |        | X      | X      | 0       | 0      | X     |
| Father  |      |     |       |        |        | X      | 0       | 0      | X     |
| Sister  |      |     |       |        |        |        | 0       | 0      | X     |
| Shirley |      |     |       |        |        |        |         | X      | 0     |
| Rachel  |      |     |       |        |        |        |         |        | 0     |
| Bruce   |      |     |       |        |        |        |         |        |       |

### Density Computations

Density is most often computed on the basis of two possible links existing between two persons. Thus a social exchange might flow from person A to person B and may or may not flow from person B to person A. The present study was directed at determining the existence only of a single non-directional link of "knowing each other." Thus the general formula for density presented in Mitchell (1971b) which is as follows:

$$\text{Density} = \frac{100 \times \text{the actual number of links}}{\text{total possible number of links}}$$

was adapted to:

$$\text{Density} = \frac{100 \times a}{n(n-1)/2}$$

where a equals the actual number of links, n = the total number of people in the social network and n(n-1) equals the total number of possible reciprocal links.

By counting the total number of actual links (indicated by the X's) in the above matrix, the density for this particular social network would be computed as follows:

$$D = \frac{100 \times 16}{9(9-1)/2} = \frac{1600}{36} = 44.44$$

This figure indicates that less than half of the total possible number of acquaintanceship links actually exist in this network. As the text has indicated this density measure can provide important information relating to the support process in the network. (Some of the significant studies related to this issue that were cited in the text include Bott (1971), McKinlay (1973), and Wellman et al. (1971).)

## APPENDIX G

Social Network MeasuresNetwork Maps

The most important contribution of the social network maps was their use as an interviewing tool. They enabled the respondents to develop a concrete visual representation of their networks and they provided a stimulus for later in-depth discussion of individual relationships. While they served to supplement the respondents' network narratives, the maps in and of themselves did not significantly contribute to the analysis and understanding of the dynamics of the respondents' networks. In the present study the respondents were given considerable latitude in how they should develop their maps (i.e., total range, number and type of distinct subgroupings, relative distance among represented relationships). It is possible that future comparative studies may want to develop standard dimensions of network mapping, but it is believed that with networks of any size network maps will be most important as an aid to data gathering while they will be of supplementary value as an analytical tool.

Network Range

The total range of each respondents' social network is recorded in the first column of figure 1 on the following page. These totals were produced by the respondents in compliance with the request to list all persons they knew "moderately well." The most interesting aspect of these results is the distribution of network range represented. This suggests that the network sizes reported by this particular group of respondents is not likely to differ markedly from network totals that might be produced by a random sampling of additional members of the social setting. No clear trends were noted to exist in terms of a relationship between absolute network size and respondent characteristics. From these results it must be assumed that network size would not be a useful predictor of helping involvement in this particular setting. There is some possibility that the general nature of the instructions led either to exclusion or over inclusion of network members in certain cases. A possible control for this in future work would be to have respondents develop separate lists for close, moderately close, and distant relationships, thereby forcing respondents to consider the full range of their networks. The present results suggest that qualitative network analysis is a more promising area of in-

vestigation for interpreting the context of the helping role.

Figure 1

Structural Indices of Respondents' Social Networks

| Respondent | Range | Density | Density Rank* |
|------------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Eric       | 18    | 50.98   | 3             |
| Gil        | 20    | 15.78   | 13            |
| Ann        | 22    | 64.94   | 1             |
| Sara       | 25    | 32.00   | 6             |
| Mort       | 28    | 35.71   | 5             |
| Cindy      | 32    | 54.64   | 2             |
| Fay        | 37    | 42.64   | 4             |
| Paul       | 38    | 30.01   | 7             |
| Mary       | 39    | 21.19   | 10            |
| Eva        | 49    | 21.08   | 11            |
| Alan       | 51    | 18.35   | 12            |
| Betsy      | 60    | 28.42   | 8             |
| Beth       | 66    | 24.71   | 9             |

\*Density indices are ranked from high density to low density with the highest density index receiving a rank of 1, and the lowest density index receiving a rank of 13.

### Density

The density values for the respondents' networks are available in column two of Figure 1. The results indicate a negative relationship between range and density and in this sense they are consistent with previous results based on quantitative measures, with a much larger and more diversified sample (Wellman et al., 1971). Similar to the range results,



the respondents' density ranks indicate a wide but rather even distribution. Although no control data is available, this suggests a high probability that the respondents' network density indices represent a distribution typical of the residents of their setting. Although no comparison data is available it is suspected that several relatively low density scores recorded are consistent with the transient nature of the college student situation. The respondents reported "compartmentalized networks," each made up of several groups such as family, hometown friends, residence hall friends, class friends. While density for these sub-groups was uniformly quite high (often totalling 70.00 or better) overall network densities tended to be low because members of the various subgroups were not acquainted with each other. Thus the network densities obtained appeared to suggest more about general college student networks than they did about any particular aspect of the respondents' helping role.

Given the present format, analysis of network structure was much less important in understanding the respondents' helping roles than was the interactional analysis of their social networks that was presented in the main body of the results and discussion. Structural analysis should not be excluded from future work because it does provide a useful frame of reference for developing interactional analysis. In addition, as more focused and more controlled studies are developed, it is quite possible that significant relationships between network structure and help giving will be determined. As it has been discussed elsewhere, significant relationships between network structure and help seeking have been noted and it is likely that continued investigation will reveal such relationships between structure and help giving.

## APPENDIX H

## Social Network Interview

Directions

What we will be doing today is called a social network interview. In this we will be considering some of the people that you know, and such things as how well you know them and how you happened to meet them. A major thing that we will be interested in is, of course, the issue of support and helping, how people are able to provide support to and obtain support from those around them.

Three stages will be involved in this. First I am going to ask you to list on these sheets people that you know at least moderately well. After that we will transfer these names to the larger sheet to form the network diagram, and finally I will be asking some questions about the diagram and some of the people when it is finished.

First on the sheets I would like you to list the people that you know at least moderately well or better. That is people that you communicate with beyond just saying hi to or having a casual conversation about the weather. In listing you may use initials for last names if you prefer. I would like you to list people by categories, by that I mean family, people in the dorm, people from hometown, people from a job you might have, whatever groupings seem appropriate to you. Some of these categories might overlap. In these cases use your judgment and place the people in categories that seem most appropriate (questions). Also as you go along if you have any questions please feel free to ask.

Now we will transfer the names to the larger sheet. First divide the sheet into categories to correspond to your original groupings. Place yourself in the center and place people around you. (Examples.) The most important things to remember are that people that you feel are closest to you should be placed closest to you on the sheet. (Example.) (Questions.)

For this next part I would like you to take all the names that you have placed on the diagram and list them on this sheet of graph paper. First list all of the names down this left hand column. Then make the same list across this top row. Be sure you list the names in exactly the same order both times. (Questions.)

Now I want you to fill in the graph by marking an X for each set of people who know each other and a 0 for each set of people who do not know each other. If you are not sure you should just leave the square blank. I am interested only if the people know each other and have spent some time together. You do not have to decide how well they know each other. (Questions.)

### Network Inquiry

#### Relationship

Now we are going to check on some points about your relationship with each of these people.

1. How would you describe your relationship with this person?
2. What is the main thing that keeps you connected?
3. How similar would you say you are to this person?
4. How did you happen to meet? How long ago?
5. What type of things do you do together? How often? How does this get arranged?
6. Would you say this person has had an influence on you? Have you influenced them?
7. How do you think they see your relationship?

#### Support

1. Do you support them? Do they support you? It goes both ways? Support is not a factor?
2. What type of issues or problems would you be willing to discuss or feel comfortable discussing with this person?
3. Why would you turn to them for these issues as opposed to some others in your network?

#### Review (after all relationships discussed)

1. How satisfied are you with your network overall?
2. How satisfied are you with your ability to obtain support?

3. Who do you go to first? Why?
4. Are there any changes you would like to make in your network?
5. Are there any particular groups that you spend most of your time with?
6. Whom do you think you will keep in touch with after you leave the university?



## APPENDIX I

Personal Development Interview

- I. To begin I'd like to check a few points that we talked about in the previous interviews.
- A. How often would you say that you get involved in helping situations?
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
  - E.
- II. Now for the rest of the time I would like to talk some more about certain aspects of the helping role, and also some more about your general thoughts and experiences as well. As with the other interviews these questions are designed to help me gain a sense of the inter-relatedness of your involvement in giving assistance to others, your own network of interpersonal relations and the experiences and qualities that are yours that make you unique as a person. As before feel free to interrupt to ask questions or take a break at any time.

To begin I'd like to talk first about what it's like living here.

- 1. What has it been like for you here at U.Mass. in this dorm and on this corridor?
  - A. Have your experiences here led to any changes for you?
- 2. Has living here influenced the helping that you do in any way?
- 3. Would you say that you were involved in helping situations before you came here?
  - A. What were they like? How did they come about?
  - B. When did helping others seem to begin for you?

4. Would you say that there has been any person or experience that has influenced you toward helping others being involved with others?

Now I'd like to talk just a bit about what you do or have done when you face a problem or a difficult situation.

5. How would you say that problems were solved or decisions made in your family? (sharing vs. independence and autonomy?)
6. If you have a problem or a difficulty now, what do you do or how do you tend to try and solve it?
7. Considering your own helping role and involvement with others are there any changes that you would like to make in your helping role or activities? How satisfied are you with the helping that you do?
8. Was there ever a time when you felt inconvenienced or burdened by your helping involvements?
  - A. Did you or have you ever turned to others for help or support in your helping role? Why? What happened?
9. How would you feel about having someone available to back you up in the future? Say a professional counselor or resource person you could call on or go to if you had a question or a problem with someone you are helping? Such a resource person would not be living here, and thus would not know or need to see the person that you are helping, but rather they would serve as a backup or resource person directly to you.
10. How would you feel about the opportunity to meet with other people such as yourself who are also involved in helping others? Such meetings might either be on an occasional or regular basis.
11. Would you say that you are likely to continue to be involved in helping situations with others in the future?
12. In relation to helping we have talked about several different points that have been important to you or may have influenced you, now if you could I'd like you to try to tie some of this together, by again speculating on the origins of your interest or in-

volvement with others. . .people that you knew. . . things that you did or experiences that you might have had. . .and how this has led to your present outlook on the situation.

13. Now this next question is something like the last one only this time I'm interested in a more general focus. Many of the things that you have said have suggested how you see yourself as a person. Now I'd like to focus on this directly and ask you: How do you see yourself as a person? How would you describe yourself?
  - A. Strengths. . .weaknesses?
  - B. What about yourself do you value most?
  - C. What about you makes you different or sets you aside from others that you know?
  - D. Are there any changes in your personality or situation that you would like to make?
  - E. What do you tend to do when people disagree with your views or have opinions different from yours? Would you say that you hold your own in an argument?
  - F. Do you think that others see you the same way that you see yourself?

In this last section, I'd like to talk some about the general experiences and issues in your background.

14. How would you describe your hometown?
  - A. Neighborhood. . .good points. . .bad points.
  - B. How did your family fit in?
  - C. Influences?
  - D. Did your family move. . .How did that affect you?
  - E. Where do most of your relatives live?
15. How would you describe your relationship with your peers as you were growing up?

- A. Number of friends?
  - B. Position with
  - C. Influences on each other?
  - D. Changes over the years?
16. Would you say that religion has had any influence on you?
- A. How active?
  - B. Family position on?
  - C. Feelings now?
17. Now I'd like to check on a few more issues concerning your family.
- A. Do both of your parents work?
  - B. How did duties and responsibilities get arranged in your family?
  - C. What type of things did you do together?
  - D. What type of things do you do together now?
  - E. How close would you say you are to your family now? (How often are you in contact?)
  - F. What influences would you say that growing up in your family has had for you?
18. What were the important things about high school for you?
- A. What was it like?
  - B. Things involved in?
  - C. What did you like about it?
  - D. Influence?
19. Have you been a member or involved in other organizations that were important to you?
- A. Role in?
  - B. How do you think that influenced you?



20. What has this interview experience been like for you?

A. How has it felt to be in the talking role?

21. Could you give me a phone number and address that I could use to get in touch with you over the summer? This is in case I discover that I have forgotten to ask you an important question. . . . This is important because in working intensively with a relatively small group of people to have a key piece of information missing about a person is very critical.

## APPENDIX J

Beth

Beth is a 20-year-old junior sociology major. She is a floor counselor and has received some training in peer sex education. She lives on a twenty-three member corridor in a women's dormitory. Her hometown is suburban. She has one sister, age 18, who lives in the same residence hall. Both of her parents work in the same real estate office. Her father is Jewish and her mother Protestant. Beth is moderately active in the Jewish faith. She is quite close to her parents, but somewhat less so to her sister. She endorses mainstream values (i.e., marriage, career, organized religion). She is a member of the university marching band. She hopes to make a career in personnel counseling in a business setting.

Beth said that she is involved "daily" in routine instrumental situations that are primarily related to her counseling role. Personal and interpersonal situations of greater magnitude occur "every week or so." She prefers a passive mode of initiation. Her following example represents a good integration of instrumental and emotional support:

. . .a close girl friend who came to me and just kind of blurted out, "I'm pregnant, what do I do?" I told her that I wanted to see her and her boy friend together and they came and talked one evening going over all of the alternatives that she had. She's a student, but she doesn't live on campus.

. . . There was a lot of testing that had to be done at the infirmary. I went with her and sat with her and held her hand to help her through it and she came down here (in Beth's room) and stayed three nights when she finally did have the abortion, so she could talk to me and go over what was going on and things like that. I know that even by doing almost nothing just being with her she felt a lot better. . . . Things ended for her very well. . . .

As the above example suggests Beth's style appears to represent a balance between directive and non-directive styles. She often supplies the structure and direction to a situation in order to facilitate a decision, but she is often a frequent supplier of empathy and emotional support.

Beth is satisfied with the present scope and effectiveness of her role. She has a strong desire to improve her "counseling techniques" in connection with her desire for a professional role. She decided on her present role as counselor after she had informally taken over for a friend who was unable to carry out her counselor role in a previous year. Although Beth believes a supportive intervention might be "beneficial" in her role, she prefers to obtain her role support from her boyfriend and others "that I know better." Beth hopes to continue her informal role, but she also views her career goal of personnel counselor as a means of expanding on her "desire to help others."

Although Beth was not active in peer helping until her junior high school years, Beth believes her role had its origins in her home. A major influence was her mother: ". . .

she (her mother) also had a lot of people calling her for help. . . ." Beth explains that now her mother is more "like a friend" than a mother, and she says, "there is nothing she doesn't know about me." Factors of general support, high self expectations, and a strong sense of responsibility also seem to be important dimensions in Beth's family background.

As she grew older, Beth says that she began to volunteer for charity work because "somebody had to do it." She had an experience of peer marginality in her junior high school years when it "took two years to get established" following a move to a new city. This experience appeared to strengthen Beth's social orientation in that she assumed the responsibility for meeting other newcomers, people which were to form the core of her friendship group.

In the present setting, Beth believes that the close proximity and open communications facilitates her helping role. She has a large interlocking network which is a very satisfactory source of both personal and role support. Direct personal statements Beth made concerning her role included: "It's a need to be needed. . .if I were in that situation I would want somebody to do it for me. . .I am happier when I am with people. . .you have to relate to those around you. . .I can help it what I think I have the ability to do."

Beth's role appears to reflect a process development, with the close continuous interaction with her mother being of key importance. There was an experience of some peer mar-



ginality which appears to sharpen her social skills, but also left feelings of uncertainty and a sense of identification with help seekers. Some present factors that seem to be important are a social orientation, reward through self esteem, a desire to be in control of social situations, identification, and a sense of responsibility. These dimensions appeared to interact very favorably with the high level of social interaction available in her present setting.

## APPENDIX K

Fay

Fay is a twenty-one-year-old junior arts and sciences major. She is a floor counselor on a twenty-six member corridor in a coed dormitory. Her hometown is suburban. She has four siblings, three brothers aged 20, 19, and 15, and a sister aged 13. Her father is a buyer for a large industrial firm while her mother holds no job outside the home. Fay's family is Catholic, but she has no interest in religion. Her sister is the only family member whom Fay says she feels close to. Fay endorses counterculture values (liberal and radical political views), and she strongly supports the women's movement. She is an active member of a local women's center. When she finishes her education she hopes to work for a women's center but she is somewhat ambivalent about this because she believes women should resist being "socialized into the helping role."

Fay says that she is involved in helping a "few times a day." The majority of these problems are routine questions associated with her counselor role, but she is also involved in several major issues where people have "personal problems" or come "just to talk." Fay prefers to be passive in her initiation of situations, but on several occasions she has been active in facilitating situations. As the following example illustrates many of Fay's helping situations were character-

ized by a considerable long-term involvement on her part:

. . .She's a friend of mine really. She quit school about a year ago and before that was having problems. She has moved to (city) but I've kept close contact with her and she is not sure what she wants and that whole thing.

Like I've been doing a lot of talking with her over a long period of time. It almost seems to be on the same topic every time we talk, but with a little variation. . . . I think she should come back to school but I try not to let my biases come into it which has been really difficult. She is not coming back to school as it turns out, but that's been a long term thing where she has had a lot of problems and had been trying to work out a lot of things and she has really needed someone to talk to.

. . .We talk about what she wants to talk about mostly, and if I want to say something I'll say it. . .

. . .We call each other on the phone about once a week. (Another friend) got up in arms last semester because she found out (x) was not coming back to school. . .(because) she was seeing a married man and so that morally outraged us. So we trotted off to (city) to persuade her to come back . . . . While we were there we decided that we wouldn't say anything. We weren't going to mention the man at all. We were just going to persuade her to come back to school, but she decided not to come, so that was cool. . . . But she is coming back in January. . . . We have been giving her a lot of support from far away. . .

Fay uses a mixture of non-directive and directive techniques. But, as the above example suggests, even when she does use more directive approaches, she makes it clear that she is arguing an "opinion" rather than offering judgments on the helpee's behavior. Thus, while she may attempt to structure the situation for the helpee, she is cognizant of the importance for the helpee to make her own decision.

Fay says that she is "pretty well satisfied" with her role, but that she would like to prevent people from developing "dependencies" on her. She feels these dependencies develop because she too is a "dependent person," thus it is only with some difficulty she can confront this issue in a helpee. She has also found her counselor role burdensome in that people come to her with petty issues (e.g., what clothes to wear). Fay believes she is effective in her role and says if she cannot help someone, she will not hesitate to seek advice or to encourage the person to seek further help. In terms of role intervention, Fay says that she has made successful use of a consultant service based in a local resource center, but that she had been "sluffed off" when she had approached two other major student counseling services with similar requests. Fay expects to continue her informal helping role in the future and plans a career in "some kind of counseling." She is hesitant about a career because in some ways she thinks it's a "crazy and neurotic thing to want to do."

Although Fay's role developed quite early as a function of the developmental context, it is rather unique in its origin. Between the ages 2 to 10, Fay spent most of her time in hospitals being treated for polio (currently there are no visible aftereffects). During this time she often helped others "when the nurse wasn't around." Family dynamics that seemed to have some influence were a strong sense of self



expectation induced by her father and some problem sharing with her mother, but Fay does not feel that these were particularly significant.

Adjusting to peer relationships after this considerable period of isolation was a challenge which Fay apparently was able to overcome, since she reports having a balanced social network during her high school years. Fay feels that the most lasting effect of her long illness was both a feeling of "strength" in that she had overcome extreme difficulty, but also feelings of "insecurity" and "uncertainty." Thus she says that helpees are attracted to her because of her strength but also she helps because she "needs to be needed." She also believes that she can be less "vulnerable" in a situation as a helper rather than a helpee. Many of her high school relationships involved helping situations.

Fay indicates that her present role is a "continuance" of the role that began in high school. The setting is important because it "encouraged her to go out and meet people," whereas she feels her parents had been "overprotective" of her before. Her present network reveals a wide range of friends, the core of whom are most supportive of her radical stands on politics and feminism. Fay is quite satisfied with both the role and personal support available from her network. In terms of her family, Fay indicates that she is close only to her sister, although she admits that it is only through her parents' support that she is able to live as she chooses.

Fay's long illness appears to have been a primary factor in developing her role. While in the hospital, situational cues facilitated her role. She later seemed to make a good peer adjustment, but helping remained as a principal means of relating to others. Her present setting has made it possible for her to continue this role. Although she admits that much of helping stems from her own dependency needs, she appears to have enough perspective on this issue to set limits when necessary. This seems to be because she is able to maintain a full range of stable network relationships. Thus she is not totally dependent on helping relationships as a means of interaction.

## APPENDIX L

Ann

Ann is a 21-year-old senior nursing major. She is a counselor on a forty-member corridor in a coeducational dormitory. Her hometown is a moderate sized city. She has two brothers, aged 27 and 24; two step-brothers, ages 29 and 20; and two step-sisters, ages 26 and 23. Her father is an industrial buyer and her stepmother works parttime in a retail shop. Ann is Jewish and, although she was previously quite active in religious activities, she no longer participates in the formal aspects of the religion. Her mother died when Ann was 10 and her father remarried when Ann was 12. She has had considerable difficulty adjusting to her stepfamily, particularly her stepmother. Some conflicts are still continuing. Ann is closest to her oldest brother, maternal aunt, and her father. Her primary interests are her career, sports, and teaching others. She has taught student colloquia on health issues for women and she is a volunteer counselor in the contraceptive counseling clinic at the student health center. In the future Ann is looking forward to a leadership position in the nursing profession and to marriage.

Ann says that she helps with minor problems and questions daily. These include questions about academic matters, instrumental assistance (e.g., typing a paper), and minor

medical questions (e.g., questions about flu symptoms, or about student infirmary resources). She adds that major personal or interpersonal issues develop every "three or four weeks." Ann's initiation style is passive. She believes people seek her out because of her nursing skills and because she "tries not to make judgments." She explains that people can "trust" her to understand and to keep confidences. Ann's helping style is principally non-directive. She says she engages mostly in "listening and talking" and she adds that she tries to be "objective" so that people can make their own decisions. She notes, however, that at times she has to guard against a strong desire to give her opinion. The following example illustrates how she had one helpee work through a decision:

. . .came to me and said that he has this problem in lending money. A friend of his asked him for a loan of \$500 for a down payment on an apartment and he was very upset because he didn't know how to say no to this person, because he really doesn't want to lend the \$500. He knew it really was going to take awhile to get it back and it really wasn't his money but his parents' money. Rather than saying what I would do, I used a gestalt technique. I had him put himself in her seat and I played him and we sort of discussed it and talked it out a bit and he started to see her point of view and he really felt that she was being an imposition on him. Then we stopped that technique and started talking about it a little more and he's ready now to go back and discuss it with her about why he wouldn't want to. First he was just going to leave it at that and not discuss it. It worked well, we've done that before. It's a technique that I like to use for myself. He's a close friend of mine too. . . .



Ann helped structure a process for obtaining a decision but she did not offer a solution to the problem. The helpee was left to act on his own decision. An important aspect of this exchange was its potential preventive nature. Prior to this exchange the helpee was just going to refuse the request, but now he has developed a plan to discuss the reasons for his refusal with the woman. It is possible this may have prevented more serious difficulties in their relationship. Although by her own admission Ann has difficulty restraining a desire to be more directive, the present example suggests she generally maintains a good balance between directive and non-directive techniques.

Ann says she is satisfied with her informal role, although she wants to improve her ability to have people "get in touch with their emotions." She explains that her own professional training has helped her in this respect and she thinks it would be beneficial for many of her helpees. Ann was less satisfied with her counselor role. Two of her primary complaints were that some people repeatedly approached her with "petty" issues, while others that she knew only distantly would approach her with major personal problems. She says this latter situation makes her uncomfortable because she would rather help with major problems only with people whom she knows fairly well. Ann did not hesitate to make a referral to a professional helper if she felt it necessary. She herself has successfully sought role support from a va-

riety of university services, thus she does not see the need for any additional professional support for her role. In her view it is best to seek role support from a specialist rather than a general consultant. However, she does believe that contact with a group of informal helpers could be very productive in supplying alternative approaches to helping situations. Several of Ann's friends also provide her with a strong source of informal role support. Ann expects to continue her informal role with friends because it is "such a constant unconscious thing." In addition her nursing career will provide an avenue for an expansion of her professional helping role.

Ann reported that her informal role began in her junior high school years. She was active as a child in volunteer helping but events associated with the death of her mother appear to have been some of the most important factors influencing her role. These include a close problem sharing relationship with her maternal aunt who is also a nurse, some increased responsibilities in the home following her mother's death, and the considerable difficulties she experienced in accepting her stepmother. Ann says that conflicts she experiences with her stepmother lead her to seek out stronger relationships with her peers. Her experiences also appear to have made her more conscious of others' problems. Helping relationships during this period included befriending a girl who was "picked on" by others, helping a boy who had several

family problems, and supporting another girl whose father had died.

This pattern of strong peer relationships and conflict with her stepmother continued throughout her high school years. She did well academically and held positions of responsibility in a number of committees and clubs. These factors provided her with many rewarding helping experiences as people sought her out with academic problems and with questions concerning committee work. Although helping was not her only means of relating to others, it did seem to be important in developing self respect and gaining recognition from others.

Ann believes that the close proximity and the frequent contacts with peers in her dormitory were important in helping her expand her role. Her network appears to be quite stable and to provide her with numerous avenues for personal and role support. Thus she has a secure base which enables her to extend herself in helping others. In describing the personal factors that influenced her helping, Ann says that she considers herself to have "good interpersonal skills." She adds that she believes she is a "strong and independent" person and thus she is able to help "more dependent" people. She notes, however, that helping is a means of reinforcing this "independent" image of herself. She also explains that while helping in general relationships is often a source of "gratification" and an "ego boost," that helping friends with

major problems frequently ends up being a help to herself as well. While her role seems to be well-integrated into her life style, it also appears to be a very important source of reinforcement for her self concept.

Events surrounding the death of her mother and the arrival of her stepmother appear to have been primary influences in Ann's role. Her maternal aunt became a positive model and a person to share problems with. This relationship appears to parallel the close parental identification noted by many of the other respondents. Ann became increasingly involved with peers and peer activities in order to avoid conflict at home. The difficulties she experienced seem to provide a basis for identification with other peers with problems. In high school she experienced many rewarding helping situations related to her academic abilities and her organizational involvements. Proximity of peers, frequent peer contacts, strong peer support, and training for a helping profession all serve to reinforce her present role. In addition her role enhances her self concept and facilitates reciprocal support relationships. High compatibility among her experiences, personal needs, and attributes of the setting all serve to strengthen her role. Her ability to modulate an inclination to be directive in her helping style and an apparent good integration of her helping and general interpersonal roles also contribute to the effectiveness of her informal role.



## APPENDIX M

Paul

Paul is a 20-year-old sophomore theater arts major. He is not a counselor. He lives on a 20-member corridor in a coeducational dormitory. His hometown is suburban. He has a 16-year-old sister. His father operates a small retail business. His mother works parttime as a secretary. Paul is Jewish but he has not been involved with the formal aspects of the religion since he was a child. Paul says that he is very close to his family and he contacts them at least once a week. He says that he has retained most of his parents' values (e.g., honesty, sharing, respect for others). Paul considers the theater, his family, and "people in general" to be the most important and interesting aspects of his life. He is the vice president of his dormitory and he is active in campus theater groups. He identifies himself as being homosexual. He plans to make a career in the theater.

Paul reports that he is involved in helping "daily." Situations he mentions include going to the store for someone, lending things, academic assistance, and "talking with someone who has a problem." There are both active and passive aspects to Paul's initiation style. He says that many people come to him because they can "trust" him and because he makes himself "approachable" by being non-judgmental. In addition he provides examples of where helpees have referred

other help seekers to him. Paul also explains that he actively initiates situations because he is very "sensitive" to the problems of others and he is "not afraid" to intervene. His helping style is non-directive. He says he attempts to be "objective" and to "point out alternatives," because, as he explained, "[helpees] don't look at both sides. . .because they are so wrapped up in the problem." The following example provides a good illustration of how Paul applies these techniques:

. . .on the corridor. . .[she] was really upset because this guy was really treating her like shit. He was being a real asshole about it, and I and everyone knew that he was using her. She was the only one who didn't know it. She would sit in her room and be really upset all the time and she is very very sensitive. Like on the weekend when most things are happening, she would end up sitting in her room crying. . . . So I would go to her room and try to talk to her about it.

It's usually the first thing that I do. It depends on the situation. Her situation was that she was sitting there alone and no one could talk to her. I came over like and held her hand. . . . She had said like I don't want to talk. That broke through the ice. Immediately all the tension that was building up in her was gone. I think that the contact that you have with people, like touching them, contact with their eyes, something like that is important.

We just talked and talked and talked. I just told her things that had happened to me and what happened to other people and that I didn't think that anybody was really worth getting ulcers over . . . . Reassurance, that type of thing.

. . .Eventually it cooled down. I don't think they are close at this point, but they say hello to each other, which is cool because I think it's always a problem trying to figure out whether or not to speak to somebody. . .she didn't want to admit it to herself, but eventually she realized that's the way it's going to be and there is nothing she

can do about it. Why ruin the rest of her life?  
Even the rest of her day?

An important aspect of Paul's helping style evident in this example is that, although he was active in initiating the helping situation, he then assumed a fairly non-directive role. Primarily he provided an emotionally supportive atmosphere in which the helpee could work out her own feelings. Through this he encouraged her to see her position as an opportunity for change rather than persisting in her thoughts of rejection. Part of this process included a sharing and drawing on his own personal experiences. This and other examples suggest Paul was able to use this technique to good effect in order to build an identification between himself and the helpee. Paul seems to be successful in using this approach to add credibility to his role, without becoming unduly involved in discussing his own problems.

Paul says that he is completely satisfied with his role and he does not wish to make any changes. He has no desire to become a counselor. If he had other commitments, he says that he would be quite comfortable in referring the help seeker elsewhere. On occasion Paul turns to peers for role support, but this is not a frequent occurrence. He endorses the suggestion of professional support for his role explaining that this would make him feel "more secure and stable." He adds that a single centralized resource center for helpers would be an improvement over the several autonomous helping

services presently existing on campus. He indicates that participation in a resource group of informal helpers would be too "awkward to work effectively," but that it might provide some advantages in sharing experiences around a specific situation. Paul says that since helping is not something he "consciously plans," and since he is not planning to make any changes in his behavior, he expects that he will continue his informal helping in the future.

Paul reports that his helping activity "goes as far back as I can remember," but it appears that his role expanded considerably following his arrival at the university. One of the most important developmental factors influencing his role appears to be his continued strong identification with both parents. An open sharing of problems is strongly encouraged in the family context. In addition Paul notes that his parents are frequently involved in reciprocal helping situations with friends. Paul makes several references to helping as a "natural thing" or something "that's expected." It seems as though this orientation has its roots in the encouragement of the open exchange of support in his home. This supportive atmosphere also seems to be the source of Paul's positive orientation to problems and self expectations, attitudes that he also attempts to facilitate in his helpees.

In terms of his early peer relationships Paul says that he is most comfortable when he is "in charge." He explains that whenever a group activity is being planned he will as-



sume the responsibility for coordinating all the arrangements. This is the only way that he can feel certain that things will be done properly. He suggests this might have some parallels to his current helping role because in his helping situations he also "trusts [himself] to make the outcome positive."

Paul reports that during his high school years he was active socially and had positions of responsibility in a number of clubs and organizations. Helping situations (e.g., assisting with homework, running an errand, talking over a personal problem) were fairly common at this time, but were restricted primarily to a close circle of friends. Paul says that he was conscious of his homosexuality by the time he was in ninth grade, but he did not discuss it with anyone and it did not cause him any problems with his peers.

Paul's move to college had a marked impact on his helping role both because of the change in setting and because he began to reveal his sexual orientation to others. During his first year Paul received ridicule and abuse for being homosexual and at this time he was more involved with his own problems than with helping others. When he moved to his present corridor, Paul says that he received much more support and acceptance. He now apparently has been able to develop a fairly stable social network of gay friends and of "straights" who "know" but who also "accept" him. This group of people appear to provide him with a considerable amount of personal and role support. Similar to most of the other helpers, Paul

also notes that the proximity and frequency of contact with peers in the dormitory setting increases his helping. Paul adds, however, that it is not only an increase in frequency but that the university provides contact with a broader range of people than he knew in high school, thus "there is more of a chance to help in different ways."

In discussing the personal contexts of his helping role, Paul notes that he does gain some "satisfaction" from helping others but he suggests that his "gayness," his sensitivity to others, and his appreciation of the importance of social support are much more important influences. As he explains his sensitivity is in part a general awareness of people and their relationships, but it also relates to his own identity as a homosexual. He says that the interpersonal problems he faced because of his sexual preference has made him more conscious or "sensitive" to the problems of others. Not surprisingly some of these helping situations include assisting others who are experiencing difficulty in deciding on and dealing with the issue of their sexuality. While many of the respondents report experiences of peer marginality during adolescence that seem to have important effects of their role, this experience appears to be quite current for Paul.

Developmental influences on Paul's role appear to be the strong encouragement and modeling of social support from both his parents, and his general positive self expectations and approach to problems that develop from this supportive atmos-

phere. Paul exhibits an early desire to be "in control" of his peer relationships and this also seems to be an aspect of his current role. A high level of social involvement including a number of helping relationships with friends suggests a continued reinforcement of Paul's inclination to help. In his present setting proximity and frequency of contact with peers are important, but Paul's struggles with his sexual identity appears to have the major impact on his role. His experience of negative reactions from others has made him aware not only of the difficulties others might have in adjusting to their homosexuality, but also of people with other problems as well. Aspects of his family life appear to create a predisposition to help in Paul, but his role as an informal helper seems to develop primarily in reaction to his success in coping with problems in his current environment. He now uses this awareness gained from his own experiences to help others.

## APPENDIX N

Sara

Sara is a 21-year-old senior nursing major. She is not a counselor. She lives on a forty-member corridor in a co-educational residence hall. Her hometown is suburban. Sara is Catholic and is an active member of the church. She has two brothers age 19 and 11 and a sister age 19. Her father is an accountant while her mother does not work outside of the home. Sara says that she is quite close to her family and she has weekly telephone contact with her parents. She considers her relationship with her mother to be more "friend to friend than a mother-daughter relationship." Sara's primary interest in life is her nursing career. Her other interests include mainly passive pursuits (e.g., reading, cooking, raising plants). She has been active in volunteer work at local state institutions. She plans to work for a few years following graduation and then she hopes to go on to graduate school in community health.

Sara reports that she is involved in helping "about four times a week." She says that most of these situations involve giving "general advice or directions" (e.g., treating a sore throat, making a referral to the health service, advice on course selection). She adds that she becomes involved in more general personal problems every four to five weeks. Sara is passive in her initiation style, although on occasion she



facilitates situations with close friends by asking leading or probing questions. She believes people seek her out because she is "friendly," and "easy to approach." She explains that she does not have a "strong personality" in that she does not force her opinions on others. She adds that "[people know] I'm not going to be critical and find fault at first glance." Her helping style is also passive and non-directive. Sara says that she usually "listens" and then "reflects on [the helpee's] feelings." She believes it is important to "give all the pros and cons" and not just her "opinions." As she explains, "I don't decide, but I help them to come to a decision." The following example provides an illustration of how she uses her supportive and reflective approach:

. . . I am friendly with him, but I don't consider myself good friends with him. He came in and started talking about an argument he had with his girl friend over the weekend and he was very upset about it, because she didn't understand his point of view and he thought she didn't care about him and he was going on and on. . . . I was just listening and then I just picked out some feelings that I got from him. I didn't know for sure if they were true feelings. . . if he resented his girl friend for not calling him up. She went away and she didn't tell him that she was leaving and he sounded resentful when he was telling me.

I said, "Listen, you sound kind of hurt and if you resent the fact that your girl friend went away for the weekend." I was just helping him reflect on his feelings. . . He was going, "Well, yeah, I guess I was." It took awhile but he kind of verified my feelings about what he was saying.

. . . Through the talks he kind of calmed down and he kind of was able to see her side a little bit more. . . . I know he was still kind of hurt

and upset about the matter, but he wasn't as angry . . . after he sat down and talked about it for awhile. That happened a few times with this one person and they kind of had an up and down thing for awhile. He'd come in really upset and talk . . . . My roommate was here a couple of times and both of us would discuss and help him really talk about what he was saying about his feelings with his girlfriend. . . .

Sara believes that her instrumental helping is the primary aspect of her role. However, as this example indicates, when she was approached with a more general problem she was able to provide a suitable supportive and reflective atmosphere that enabled the helpee to work out his feelings. A key factor about her role revealed by this example is that she is willing to take the time to listen even though she says this person was not a close friend. Although she was rather modest in her role description, the range of instrumental assistance, and the quality of the emotional support she provides suggest that her role is quite important to those around her.

Sara is quite satisfied with her role. She has no desire to be a counselor. She explains that she believes "much of what they do is not helping. . . but busy work." Also she doubts her ability to be impartial and unemotional enough to feel comfortable in a counselor role. Sara says that, although she rarely needs it, she has considerable peer role support available. In addition she expresses no hesitation about making a referral to a professional helper if she felt

it were necessary.

Sara says that her helping involvements are not "severe" enough to warrant professional role support for herself, although she thought such a service would be quite important for counselors. Sara expects that her continued professional training will also increase her skills as an informal helper. She adds that she will continue her informal role primarily with close friends. She is most enthusiastic about developing her role as a professional helper.

Sara did not become active as an informal helper until after she began attending the university. Developmental factors, however, did appear to have some influence on her current helping role. Sara reported that she has had a continued strong positive relationship with both parents. Her relationship with her mother appears to be particularly important. Sara says that she has always been able to turn to her for support. In addition she says that her mother strongly encouraged her "to be open to others" and to always be "unselfish." These factors plus a strong identification with the moral and ethical teachings of the Catholic church seem to be important in Sara's current willingness to support others.

Sara recalls that during her grade school years she was friendly with a large group of peers, but this changed following her family's move to another community when she was in the seventh grade. Sara found it quite difficult to establish new relationships. She describes herself as being "in

between" because, although she had a few friends in "the intellectual group" and a few friends in "the sports group," she felt as though she did not belong with either group. She explains that she was too "shy" to "force [my] way in," and that the others seemed to have no interest in asking her to be a member. During this time Sara says that she "sought help more than I gave it." She concentrated primarily on academics, but she also engaged in daily volunteer work at a local Veterans hospital. If Sara was not rejected by others neither was she accepted. This experience seems to have provided her with some identification with others experiencing interpersonal problems. In addition through her volunteer work she discovered many of the rewarding aspects of helping.

At first, Sara's experiences at the university were a continuation of her high school peer relationships. She says that she frequently felt "lonely and isolated" and that she often telephoned her mother for support. This changed when Sara was able to establish close friendships with a group of eight other women. She explains that this group engaged in extensive mutual problem sharing and she discovered that she was a "better listener than a talker." Sara believes that this experience was a primary influence in giving her the "confidence" to help others.

Sara is Ann's roommate (see Appendix L). Sara says that Ann has provided her with role support. In addition she believes Ann has influenced her role because Ann is "friendly



and outgoing" which in turn has made her "more sensitive to people." Finally she notes that Ann's extensive helping involvements have increased her helping contacts as well.

Sara believes that the personal factors governing her helping are her general interest and linking for people and the strong sense of satisfaction she derives from her role. She says this is particularly true when people report back to her and tell her how helpful she has been.

Although Sara's role did not emerge until after she arrived at the university, important developmental influences appear to have included her strong parental and religious identifications, and her active support relationship with her mother. A feeling of nonacceptance by peers from the seventh grade to her first year in college apparently provided Sara with some sense of empathy and identification with others experiencing problems. Volunteer helping experiences revealed some of the rewards to be gained in helping. Close friendship with a college peer group provided the experience and the support which seemed to initiate Sara's role. Sara also believes that her association with Ann has helped her to be more effective in interpersonal situations and has increased the number of helping contacts that she has. Reward through an increase in confidence and self concept appear to be primary personal factors influencing her current role. It is also likely that experiences she has had in connection with her career training have also increased her confidence in her in-

formal helping techniques. While the current context appears primary in facilitating Sara's role it is possible that her present experience will provide her with the confidence to continue her role in future settings.

## APPENDIX O

Gil

Gil is a 20-year-old junior education major. He is a counselor on a 20-member corridor in a coeducational dormitory. His hometown is a small town in a rural area. He has two brothers, ages 23 and 15. His father has a professional career, while his mother does not work outside the home. His mother is protestant and his father Catholic, but Gil says he is not actively involved in any organized religion. Gil's younger brother is the only family member whom he included in his immediate social network. He reports frequent conflicts with his father from early childhood. He says that although his mother supported him, she would never "stand up for him against his father." Gil is in weekly contact with his family, but he says that there is only "understanding" between himself and his younger brother. Gil says that his primary interests are his teaching career, "enjoying the company of others," and being alone "to think." He is actively involved in the issues of racial and sexual "oppression." Recently he helped organize a counselor taught, student colloquium on the rights and problems of blacks, women, and homosexuals. Gil identifies himself as being homosexual. He has no definite plans for the future other than to "travel" and "to make myself content."

Gil reports that he is involved in instrumental helping

(e.g., request for information) daily, while "sitting down and talking out a problem with someone occurs a couple to three times a week." Gil says that these often involve "boy-friend and girlfriend" problems. Gil is generally passive in his initiation style. He points out, however, that he often facilitates a discussion of broader problems once a helpee approaches him with a "routine" question. Gil believes that he is particularly "sensitive" to when such an initiation is needed. He emphasizes that he is cautious about this because he believes that "helping is most effective when there is a direct request." He says otherwise people would feel that he is "prying" or that his attempt would be fruitless because the person had already decided "there is nothing I can do."

Gil is also primarily passive or non-directive in his helping style. He explains that he conceives of his role as that of "facilitator or catalyst." He says that once a person starts to talk he "listens" and tries "to help them with the options." He adds, "one of the most important things they. . . can get out of it is to be able to do it themselves." The following example suggests how Gil developed this approach during a series of helping contacts with the same person:

He is a freshman. . . I have been his confidant at times. We are on that counselor-counselee type thing, although I don't like to view it that way. I view it more in terms of he looks up to me. In that sense in a wierd sort of way it's like a brother type relationship. I like it. It's a support to me in that some one values my advice and my confidence in myself.



. . .He's changed values radically since I met him. I've seen this change and it sort of endeared me to him. This rapid change for the better. . . . He enjoys experimenting with his emotions and his feelings. . . . He is a brave person and he is really searching and he is looking and he is finding and it's exciting. . . .

. . .Another thing that kind of endears him to me is in the past semester he lost his father. A very traumatic thing. I have never gone through anything like that and God help me I hope that it isn't too soon. Yet he at that stage was just so vulnerable and he came through it very well. I don't think I played so much a factor in that, but just the fact that I could and did exhibit a willingness to support him was enough. . . .

Gil's role in this situation was not so much one of focusing on a specific problem situation as it was a supporting of the helpee through a period of change and development in his life. Gil did not seek this person out, but his activity here appears to be consistent with a statement he made: "I won't go out of my way to help people. . .but once I am in a situation I suppose I would do just about anything that had to be done." His commitment in time and his availability and willingness to provide a "sounding board" seems to be quite important. Gil is also quite frank in admitting the personal rewards that accrue from his role. The helpee appeared to continue this contact because his role was one of facilitation and support rather than sympathy or advice giving.

Gil says that he is generally satisfied with his role. He says that he avoids some potential problems because he discourages helpees who want to make him "their sole source of support." In these instances and when he has other com-

mitments, Gil says that he feels comfortable in suggesting other sources of assistance. Gil says that a strength in his role is that he has more "life experiences (e.g., adjusting to his homosexuality, experiences in Europe as an exchange student), but he believes that it is important for his continued role development for him to keep on increasing his "wisdom" through additional life experiences.

Gil says that he also enjoys his floor counselor position, particularly its prestige value. He has experienced some disappointment because he had anticipated that he would be viewed "more professionally" (i.e., in charge of planning all corridor activities), but the majority of the people on his corridor prefer that he act in a more informal role.

Gil reports that he has sought out both professional and informal role support. He says that this has been particularly helpful in a recent situation that involved a suicide threat. Gil believes that there are sufficient professional university resources available for informal helpers and their roles, thus he thinks any additional program of professional role support would be superfluous. He is more favorably disposed toward the concept of working with a support group of informal helpers, but he cautions that while "it is hypothetically a great idea" that his experiences with counselor meetings suggests that "personal conflicts would probably keep it from working." Gil believes that he "will always have the disposition to help" and thus he expects his informal role

will continue. He adds that in the past few years he has changed his concept of his planned teacher role from where he "would be in charge and instruct," to one that includes helping as well.

Gil believes that his informal peer helping role did not begin until after he entered the university. He says prior to this time he was involved in "assisting" which he defined as "following a set plan, or helping someone complete a project." On the other hand, he believes his helping "involves a lengthy thought process. . .making all the alternatives known to yourself so that you can make them known to other people."

Gil speculates that some elements in his family environment were an influence on his current role. He explains that he was "always praised for doing good things" and that he learned helping was "a way of getting attention or recognition." For the most part, though, he characterizes his home as being more a place of conflict than support. He says he was constantly at odds with his father and, although his mother provided some support, she never disagreed with his father. Currently Gil seems ambivalent toward his parents. He explains that he "loves them in a way," but that he really does not consider them "to be close" or to be "the least bit understanding."

The difficulties he experienced in his home life most likely gave Gil an awareness of and sensitivity to personal problems. Unlike some of the other helpers, he did not seem

to quickly translate this into helping relationships with peers. In fact Gil reports that he had few support relationships with peers until he entered college. He describes himself as a "wierd kid" who "threw tantrums." Although he says that he did have a few friends as a young child, as he grew older he preferred to "hang around alone more and more."

During this period he says he did not help others "because I had enough problems of my own." He blames himself in part for his isolation because he wanted to be a member of the "in groups" or not at all. In turn he passed up friendship opportunities with several other peers because they had "too many faults." Much of his time in high school was spent in organized activities (e.g., yearbook and newspaper staff, art and theater clubs).

Two experiences during his last year in high school seemed to be important role influences--a trip to Europe as an exchange student and a summer job in a children's day camp. During his stay in Europe a woman coordinator for the program spent a considerable amount of time supporting Gil and helping him to resolve many personal issues. He now appears to carry out a somewhat similar role for others. Gil reports that his camp experience "sparked my interest in helping" because "the kids were easy to help. . .their needs were easily met." Perhaps more revealing are Gil's statements that he liked the "authority and the respect" and he liked "being somebody."



Gil's first interpersonal experiences at the university were a continuation of his high school years. He entered at mid year and found his residence hall to be inhospitable because social relationships were already firmly established. The following fall his social position improved. He established what appears to be a relatively small but very supportive social network. Much of the cohesion among these people is built around an acceptance of homosexuality. As his own support base became more stabilized, Gil felt more comfortable in extending himself to others. Similar to the other helpers, he reports that the close living quarters and the frequency of contact increases his helping because he can become "aware of unspoken needs." He says that he will not pick up such cues if he is not living in such proximity with others.

Gil discusses several personal influences on his role that suggest reward was a quite important factor. These comments include: "it's a need to be needed," "I get pleasure out of giving other people pleasure," and "there is a recognition value." An additional personal gain suggested by Gil is vicarious experience as he explained: "you have the benefit of going through the experience without having to suffer some of the real painful aspects of them." Finally he has been able to draw on his own experiences in adjusting to his homosexuality to help others attempting to explore similar issues.

Gil's role did not fully develop until he reached the

university. Early factors that appear to have some bearing on his current role were an experience of conflict with his father and a learning that helping was one way to avoid punishment and gain recognition. A sense of being "different" and not being accepted by important peer groups until he reached college has provided Gil some identification with others in similar positions. A supportive contact with a woman coordinator in a student exchange program helped Gil overcome many personal conflicts, while a helping experience with children proved to be quite rewarding and suggested many of the personal benefits to be gained from helping. Gil reports that control, recognition, self respect, pleasure, and vicarious experience were all important personal influences on his role. In addition he believes that his experiences in adjusting to his homosexuality and his experiences as an exchange student have extended his personal growth beyond that of many of his peers. He believes that his helping is increased by his being able to draw on these experiences.

Gil is quite open in discussing the personal motivations in his informal role. Strong as these needs appear to be, they do not seem to significantly interfere with his role. He has sufficient reciprocal peer support from his own network. His helping and general interpersonal relationships are integrated so that he does not need to actively seek helping situations as a sole means of satisfying interpersonal needs. Gil's general role orientation suggests that it will

be highly congruent with developing a helping role within the structure of his teaching role.

## APPENDIX P

Betsy

Betsy is a 21-year-old senior mathematics major. She is a counselor on a 17-member corridor in a women's dormitory. Her hometown is suburban. She has a brother 19 and two sisters ages 18 and 14. Her father is an executive for a large national corporation and her mother does not work outside of the home. Her parents have Christian backgrounds but her family is not religiously active. Currently Betsy has no religious involvement. She describes her family relationships as "positive but rather superficial." Her strongest family relationship is with her brother who is also attending the university. Betsy does not indicate any strong personal interests outside of her career and her boyfriend who lives in another state. She is involved in a tutoring project in a high school in a nearby city. Betsy plans to join her boyfriend, teach high school "for a few years", and she then hopes to go on to graduate school in mathematics.

Betsy says that she is involved in helping "a few times a week." Aside from routine instrumental situations, she says most of her helping involves roommate conflicts, academic problems, and "listening to people's frustrations." Betsy is passive in her initiation style. She believes people seek her out because she is "outgoing," "open," and "easy to approach." In addition she describes herself as being



non-judgmental. As she explains, "I don't have strong beliefs about anything. . .[thus helpees] are pretty sure I'm not going to come down on them." Betsy is also non-directive in her helping style. She describes her role as one of "listener." She adds that her goal in helping is "just to make them aware of the options," and "to help them blow off steam." The following example illustrates her supportive, non-directive style:

. . .a girl came to me and she had been here quite a bit. She was having some roommate problems and other problems and she hadn't been making any effort to change. . . . She was doing poorly in a course, physics, and I had taken physics. . .but I couldn't very well tutor her for nine hours a week. . . . She said, "I'm really doing poorly and making a lot of effort." And here she was in this honors course where they hit you with extras the first day. She was just unhappy because she wanted to be an astronomy major since she was a little girl.

. . .She came in one day. . .very depressed . . .and said I want to talk to you. So I said, "Should I shut the door?" and she said, "Yeah," and she started crying and she said, "I don't know what I'm going to do about the physics. . .I think I should drop out of school." I thought this was a little radical and I said there are other alternatives. . . . You might drop the physics. She did know that she could drop the course. . .when you are a freshman you don't really believe it, because you can only drop a course if the teacher molests you in the hall or something. . . . So I said you can add another course, or pick up the credits later, or you could see the prof to see if you could get some outside help. . . . But it really looks as though you don't have the math background.

So she said, "Should I drop physics?" I said "Well, I don't know, it's your decision and all I can say is that it's possible to drop the course, and if you are getting swamped it might be a good idea. You could drop out of school, but you have already invested some time and just because physics

is hard doesn't mean you will flunk everything. . ."  
 So she said, "I'm going to think about it."

She came back and said, "I'm going to drop physics and then I'll just have four majors, but that's ok, I'll take some more later." She did very well.

. . .It was basically the decision to drop physics was a decision not to be an astronomy major. . .and she let herself be in that kind of limbo without having an official major. . . . I felt I helped her in that she was all set to run downstairs and drop out of school. The story ended happily and she is into Chinese now.

The style or process illustrated by this example was also reflected in several other of Betsy's helping examples. She first supports or facilitates an emotional "catharsis" in the helpee, and she then encourages a pragmatic, situationally determined solution to the problem. In her role she is less inclined to probe into psychological causes or personality changes than are some of the other helpers. At one point Betsy herself characterizes her role as "doing a Mom kind of thing," which seems to be accurate in that she is generally involved in supporting younger students in their adjustments to college life. It is not that she is unaware of the broader implications (e.g., dropping a course actually involving a significant change in career plans), but she generally chooses not to confront the helpee on these more introspective issues. Unless such discussion is initiated by the helpee she leaves this self exploration to the helpee's discretion.

Betsy is generally satisfied with her role, but there is some indication that she would like to strengthen her abili-

ties. In part this change relates directly to her style as described above. She says she needs to be a "better listener" and that she needs "to try to hear what they are really saying through the words." This suggests that she would in fact like to increase her ability to facilitate more introspective discussion with her helpees. Betsy's only complaint about her role is that at times she feels "used" by some people who just come in to "bitch." She would like to assert herself more in these situations, but she says, "I usually don't feel bothered until afterwards." She enjoys her counselor role because it has increased her helping contacts. She adds that "when my official role ends I expect I will want to do more [helping] than I [will] be doing."

Betsy's primary source of role support is a staff person in her residence hall although she says she hasn't had to turn to this person very often. She explains "I haven't recognized situations that have been so heavy that I felt out of control." She believes that any additional professional role support would be "duplicating some services already available." She says it would be more important for the existing services to "use more publicity" so that helpers would know what was available to them. Because of her positive experiences in counselor meetings, Betsy strongly endorses the concept of meeting with a resource group of informal helpers. She says that a primary advantage to such a group is it provides comparisons on how others "handle situations." Betsy

expects that her informal helping role will decline after she leaves the university. She explains that she believes "college is a prime time for helping" and "[in adult life] there isn't so much peer discussion of things." She adds that once she is "out with people who are happy and settled," she will continue to help but only with "close friends."

Betsy did not become involved in informal peer helping until after her arrival at the university. Family dynamics appear to have less of an influence on her current role than was true for many of the other helpers. Betsy indicates that her parents are quite supportive of her and this appears to have provided some basis for her positive approach to problems and her belief in herself. In addition she has a strong respect for her father's moral and ethical views which appear to be reflected in her role. Finally she notes that her mother was "kind of a considerate person. . .[which] kind of instilled a feeling for other people." Betsy reports, however, that she was never able to share problems with her parents because her father is too "remote" and her mother is "too emotional and wouldn't understand." She describes her relationship with both parents as "nice" but "superficial."

A developmental factor that appears to have a stronger influence on Betsy's current role is her experience of non-acceptance or peer marginality during her high school years. She was active in organizations (e.g., yearbook staff, math team, orchestra and chorus) but she says, "I definitely was



not one of the popular kids." She explains, "My friends were people who didn't fit into any of the popular categories either, we were all late bloomers socially." It is likely that this experience gave her some sensitivity to the problems in social adjustment that she now talks over with her helpees.

In contrasting her high school and college settings Betsy says that her move to college facilitated the development of her role in part because there are "more problems." In high school, "I didn't feel that there was anybody who really needed help. . . high school life wasn't changing." In college, however, "a lot of things change all of a sudden. . . it's hard to handle five problems in different areas all at once." She believes her setting is quite conducive to helping because, "a lot of people have similar problems, but are at different stages of handling them." Much of her own role is one of helping younger students deal with situations she has coped with before.

Several of Betsy's personal experiences at the university have also strongly influenced her role. Many of these seem to be related to her own personal growth. She explains that in college she found that "people respected me as a person and they were interested in what I had to say." She says this encouraged her to be more conscious of what she thought and of how she relates to others. In addition she says she built up some helping contacts because she was more outgoing

and willing to initiate conversations with others than were some of the other freshmen. The reason for this was that her boyfriend had preceded her to the university. Thus she had "support" so she could afford to take the risk of "reaching out to others."

Two different experiences, one as a helpee and one as a helper, seemed to be the critical catalysts in initiating Betsy's role. Her counselor during her first year helped her discuss several important personal issues. Betsy says "this was almost a family style support and it helped me realize that I could make up decisions myself and this would not change what this person thought about me." Betsy adds that she probably would not have chosen to become a counselor except this person "really enjoyed it so much." It is interesting to observe that Betsy now appears to be playing a similar role for Mary (see text) who reports Betsy as being a positive influence on her role.

In her first experience as a helper Betsy says that during her sophomore year a corridormate began talking to her about "problems." She found this "flattering" that someone "really wanted to know what I thought." The reinforcement of this experience and the encouragement of her counselor seemed to direct Betsy into her helping role.

Personal factors supporting Betsy's role are both its direct reinforcement value and the fact that it provided her with a means for continuing her own personal growth. She

says that she "enjoyed" helping and that she always feels a "strong empathy" for people who are "unhappy." She thinks perhaps she feels this "more strongly than the average person" because "I have to make them feel happy or else I can't feel happy." Most interesting is Betsy's suggestion that helping provides her a means for her own personal growth. She says that she enjoys spending time with people in "one-to-one situations" because she can "explore what they are thinking about." She explains that if she can understand how they are "living their lives" that this gives her "input" on how to "run" her own life. She says she is not only giving "help and support" but that it is "in trade for helping find where I am."

Betsy's helping role did not develop until after she arrived at the university. Family dynamics appeared to have a relatively limited influence on her current role. Parental support provided her with a generally positive orientation toward herself and others and she acquired a strong moral and ethical position from her father. An open sharing of problems or modeling of helping did not appear as a significant aspect in her family life. Her somewhat marginal position with peers in high school apparently has led to some of her current feelings of empathy with others with problems. When she reached college the support of her boyfriend and of an older woman counselor helped her confront some of her own personal issues and provided her with a secure base from which she

could reach out to others. She found her own initial experience as a helper to be quite rewarding. All of these personal experiences helped direct her toward a helping role. Personal influences appear to be that her role provides her with a direct reinforcement of her self concept and it also supplies her with a vicarious means of learning through others' experiences. Betsy believes her role was highly determined by her current setting and that her helping would be limited to close friends once she left the university. It seems probable, however, that her enjoyment of a fairly structured helping role will be important in her possibly developing an expanded helping role in her position as a high school teacher.



## APPENDIX Q

Alan

Alan is a 20-year-old junior psychology major. He is not a counselor. He lives on a forty-member corridor in a coeducational residence hall. His hometown is a small town in a rural area. He has a brother age 18 and sister age 9. His father works as a purchasing agent and his mother works part time as a town librarian. Alan comes from a protestant background, but he has no active interest in religion. Alan feels closest to his mother because she has always been "accepting" of him, while he reports he is just now resolving many of the negative feelings toward his father that resulted from constant conflicts between them during his adolescent years. Alan says he is not close to his brother because he believes his father has favored his brother for the last several years. He likes his sister but does not consider her an important member of his network because she is too young. Alan's primary interests are sports, psychology, and "organizing things." He recently organized a committee to deal with racial issues in his dormitory. He has also been active in volunteer work in nearby state institutions. He plans to go to graduate school in clinical psychology.

Alan reports that "hardly a day goes by" when he doesn't talk to someone about a small issue or problem. He adds that he is involved in "really heavy conversations" (e.g.,

general personal problems, problems of sexual adjustment, racial issues) about once a week. Alan is fairly active in his initiation style. He says he likes to "draw [information] out of people" by "using leading or pointed" personal questions. He also believes people are likely to approach him because his psychology training makes him "more willing to listen" and his position as a well-known dormitory figure (verified by others) increases his visibility as a helper. Consistent with his active initiation of helping, Alan is also frequently directive and challenging in his helping style some evidence of which can be seen in the following:

. . . One of the new kids on the floor this semester and he really has some. . . growing up problems if you want to put it that way. He really doesn't know what he wants in life. . . he rejects everybody else except himself. He puts society down. . . or he will put specific types of groups down. . . . They don't love enough. . . he uses love quite a bit. . . . He believes in free sex. . . sex and love as two different things. . . maybe it's right to think that way, but it's that he uses it for his own personal gain. . . . He says that it's justified because this is how our society should be, and that way he can get laid as many times as he wants. . . . He let me see some of [his autobiography] and you could see from his background what his problem was, lack of love. He was rejected by his parents. . . he had to do it on his own, and of course he is a loner. . . doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with it, but you can see the correlation that it has. We used to bullshit about psychology and he turned me off a bit because I didn't agree with his philosophy, but I thought he was saying this for some reason. . . . So we just argued and brought up points to each other, and I think this helped him in a way, because I had put a challenge to him that he hadn't had for a long time. . . . Saying maybe this philosophy can't work. I kept questioning him and saying, "Well, why do you want

it," and he said, "Are you trying to psychoanalyze me?" I backed off and said, "No more psychology." Maybe I should do that. . .but I'm not helping really because he still has that problem, but again I think it's something he will grow out of. I was able to listen to what he had to say and to put a few dents in his perfect philosophy, maybe put him down to earth a little bit.

Alan was one of the few helpers to be this directive and actively set out to change the helpee's basic orientation. Although he could generate a number of useful insights, Alan limited the effectiveness of his role somewhat in his attempts to convince the helpee of the validity of his position. A key aspect of Alan's role is he can encourage a helpee to begin talking to him by asking challenging questions about significant personal issues. This aids some help seekers in adopting a fresh perspective on their problems, while it causes others to terminate the helping relationship prematurely. His apparent inability to be more flexible in the use of his confrontive style appears to limit the number of helpees Alan can deal with effectively.

Alan reveals that he has some awareness of these limits in his role. He says that although he is "generally satisfied" with his role, he would like to see "more people" and more "different kinds of people." In addition he notes that "my self-centeredness gets in the way sometimes." He explains that sometimes he "looks at [himself] and [his] own goals" when he should be looking at the goals of the helpee.

Although he has been quite active on a counselor selec-

tion committee, Alan does not want to become one himself. He explains that the role would have "too many responsibilities" and that it would restrict his freedom to "express [his] own opinion" because counselors are supposed to remain impartial. Alan occasionally turns to friends or his girl friend for support with his role. Although he thought supportive professional interventions were "generally a good idea" and would be a valuable source of educational information, he doubts that many helpers would make use of such resources. Alan hopes to continue his informal role, but he is also looking forward to a professional helping role as a psychologist.

Alan did not become active in his informal role until after his arrival at the university, but some developmental influences did seem to be important. He says that his mother's general "outgoing" nature and the encouragement of both parents to respect others led him to have a positive orientation toward others. In addition he attributes his willingness to take on difficult helping situations in part to his parents' encouragement to persevere at difficult problems. In a more negative vein, Alan's belief that his brother usurped a favored position with his father appears to have left Alan with a good deal of personal uncertainty. His current helping role in many respects seems to be an attempt to bolster his sense of personal and interpersonal security.

Alan labels his high school years as "the worst three years of my life." He says that he was "alone" much of the



time and although he "fluctuated" among several groups he never belonged to any particular group. He believes this experience has a considerable influence on his current desire to help people who are "hurt" or who are "treated unfairly."

Alan finds his university dormitory setting to be much more supportive. He reports that he does not have to "put up fronts" for people to be "nice." He points out that the general "happy and content" atmosphere of his present setting makes it easier to recognize people in trouble. Although Alan's interpersonal situations appear to have improved considerably over his high school years, there are indications that some problems still persist. He reports one of the larger social networks, but most relationships were friends to "having a good time with" while very few were relationships that involved open reciprocal support. While he is active and popular in dormitory activities, many of his interpersonal relationships appear to lack substance. Thus while the supportive aspects of the setting and Alan's general sense of belonging seem to encourage his role, his helping also seems to be influenced by a desire to make more meaningful contacts with others.

Alan's comments concerning his personal motivations for helping seem to bear this out. He speculates that his helping is in part an attempt to "alleviate the loneliness" he experienced in high school. At various points he comments that helping is "fulfilling," "pleasurable," and "a boost to

[his] ego." He adds that he "enjoys feeling wanted" and that he doesn't think he would help so much if "it wasn't for the self satisfaction."

Personal and social factors in his present setting appear to be the primary influences on Alan's role. Family factors that appear to have some influence are his identification with his mother's "outgoing" personality, and parental encouragement to persevere in the face of challenges and to always respect others. A sense of being rejected by his father and an even stronger experience of rejection from his high school peers seem to be very powerful influences. Although he gains considerable role support from his present setting and he has expanded his network of social relationships, Alan's personal comments reveal that gaining acceptance and recognition from others remains a primary motivation in his helping. His helping role appears to be generally less effective and less well integrated into his patterns of interpersonal relationships when compared to the helping roles of the other respondents. Similar to Eva, whose case was discussed in the text, conflict with a parent and strong unsatisfied interpersonal needs appear to interfere with role performance.

## APPENDIX R

Cindy

Cindy is a 19-year-old sophomore physical education major. She is not a counselor. She lives in a 30-member corridor in a women's dormitory. Her hometown is suburban. She has a brother aged 22 and sister aged 19. Her father has a managerial position in industry while her mother does not work outside the home. Cindy's parents were active in the Episcopalian church, but Cindy is not involved in any formal religion. Cindy is in contact with her family at least once a week. She has a very close relationship with her father which stems in part from their strong mutual interest in athletics. Cindy reports that reciprocal support has always been a significant aspect of their relationship. In addition she notes that she is the one her father turns to when something needs to be done in the home because her brother and sister "couldn't be trusted to do their share." Cindy says that she likes her mother, but that she is too "emotional" and too "possessive." She adds that her mother will frequently turn to her for support concerning routine daily problems. Cindy's relationship with her sister is one of indifference while she and her brother are openly antagonistic. Cindy believes they both resent her because of her favored position with her father. Cindy's primary interest is athletics. She is a member of a varsity athletic team. Although ineligible

to play intramural sports, she volunteered to organize the intramural athletics for her dormitory. Cindy has an intense desire to become a physical education teacher in order that she can "pass on" her "own love of sports to someone else."

Cindy reports that she is involved "daily" with small instrumental favors (e.g., lending books, money; letting people store food in her refrigerator) with small emotional situations (e.g., talking to someone about a poor test grade). She says "larger" situations (e.g., unwanted pregnancies, drug problems, general personal adjustment problems) are much less frequent, occurring about every "four or five weeks." There are both passive and active aspects to her initiation style. She believes many people seek her out because she is "open," "friendly," "optimistic," and because she is a "willing listener." She also reports that if she suspects that someone has a problem that she "will check it out." Depending on the person's response she will either make a generally supportive comment and change the topic or she will encourage the person to talk further.

Cindy is primarily non-directive in her helping style. She says that most often she "listens and offers sympathy" because many helpees just want to "sit down and scream and blow off steam." When people approach her with a more focused problem she says she attempts to offer them "two or three choices or options." She adds she carefully avoids giving direct advice because, as she explains, "I would only get



shot in the end if I make the wrong decision. . .and they would never want to come again." The following example illustrates how Cindy is able to supply both instrumental and emotional assistance in a given helping situation:

. . .girl friend of mine at home was pregnant. Like she was at home and I was at school. I had been at school for about three weeks. I saw her before I left and she said that her and her boyfriend were having sex. Well I said, "That's cool and o.k. I know you two are getting married anyway." Then she said, "There is a possibility that I might be pregnant." I said, "Well, let me know what you find out," and she says, "I don't know where to go."

I said, "Well, I'm going back to school but I know a couple of places you can go. You'll have to check them out, because I just won't be there." So I gave her a couple of hospitals, because my sister had been through the same problem the year before. So this was like old hat.

So she went and found out that she was, and she said, "Well, what am I going to do about it?" I said, "What does [boyfriend] want to do about it?" He wasn't around. He had just gone into the service.

I said, "Find out what he wants." So they decided on an abortion. She she said, "What do I do now?"

So, I said, "Go to [hospital] in [city] and you can find something there that will accomodate you." I went home and went with her. She didn't particularly want to go alone and we made all arrangements and everything. Well she didn't have enough money, so I loaned her the money, whatever I had at the moment. . .then everything was done and taken care of.

An important aspect of this example is that Cindy did not advise for or against the abortion but rather she suggested that the woman and her boyfriend come to a decision. Once the decision was made she was quite willing to supply

both instrumental and emotional support. Other examples suggest that Cindy is equally comfortable to limiting herself to a less active approach of listening and providing emotional support. This flexibility in style appears to be an important strength in her role.

The major change Cindy wants to make in her role is to have more people come to her. She notes, however, that there were times when she finds it difficult to help, specifically when she has an academic deadline to meet or when she is concerned about problems of her own. She explains, "it's just idealistic to say that you will put whatever is in your mind aside and. . .listen to them." She adds that she is beginning to know her "own limits and capacities" and she says she will generally tell a person if she doesn't think she can help. She says she has no desire to become a counselor because "you have to help whether you want to or not." She believes it is important for the helper to want to be involved with the helpee.

Cindy says that she frequently will turn to friends for support and advice concerning her helping role, but that she is always careful to "keep confidences." She suggests that these contacts are important for her because they helper obtain an "objective" view when her view is "too subjective" because of her own biases. In addition, since she says it is not uncommon in her experience for helpees to go to more than one helper, she occasionally consults with another helper con-

cerning the same helpee.

Cindy is uncertain about the need for any professional support for her role. She says most situations "wouldn't require it." She points out that the abortion situation noted above would have been a time when she needed professional advice had it not been for her sister's experience with pregnancy the year before. She says that only in such extremes would professional support be necessary, and these were fairly rare occurrences.

Cindy is definite in her opposition to being involved in any form of group contact with other informal helpers. She says that she would feel "inhibited" in such a situation. She also expresses a belief that contact with a group would "professionalize" the role too much. She explains that she believes people would turn away if they thought they were being discussed in a group. She also points out that "professional people really get wrapped up and they start looking deeper maybe than they have to."

Cindy expects to continue her informal helping, but she adds, "If people stop coming I can't go out recruiting." She views her future teaching role as the most important vehicle for her future helping. She says, "you can't reach everybody, but you can let [students] know if they want anything you are available."

Cindy reports that her informal peer helping began in high school but she believes that her family experiences def-

initely contributed to this development. She explains, "I've always been kind of a helper in the family in the sense that I have always been depended on, and I have grown accustomed to that role." She adds that both her parents are very "generous" which has encouraged her to be the same. Most important, however, appears to have been her close and reciprocal support relationship with her father, which encourages her to be open and sharing in problem situations. In addition her mother frequently turns to Cindy for advice and support on minor problems and irritations. A positive feeling toward herself and others, a strong sense of responsibility, and an active involvement in a helping role with both of her parents appear to be significant factors in the development of Cindy's role.

Cindy's interests in sports made peer adjustment difficult for her in junior high school. Prior to this time she had had a large group of friends, but once she entered the seventh grade she says that she began to be "ostracized" because she was a girl who played sports. During this time Cindy became friendly with an older girl who used to ask her advice concerning her boyfriends. The relationship did not last, however, as the girl became more interested in her boyfriends than she was in Cindy. As Cindy explains, "I found out that I needed her a lot more than she needed me."

Cindy believes that the events surrounding the end of this relationship produced some of the strongest effects on



her helping role. She says that the older girl introduced her to "drugs" and as time passed she found herself becoming more involved with drugs and more isolated and confused about herself. A teacher and some of Cindy's other acquaintances were finally able to help her through this difficult period. Cindy says that this support made her "realize there are things you can do for people." Currently she says her memories of "being alone" and "of not knowing anybody was there" enable her to "feel when somebody feels that way without them even saying anything." After this period Cindy became quite active socially in high school and she also began helping others. Her examples include helping a boy who was experiencing family conflicts, supporting a boy whose friend was killed in an accident, and supporting a girl whose mother had died.

Cindy continued her helping role when she entered the university. She points out, however, that her role became more broad because she was living in close proximity with a large group of peers. In high school she says she was usually involved only in the "traumatic things," but that living in "close quarters" made it possible to "pick up on things much easier." An additional factor influencing Cindy's current role is her large relatively dense social network which provides her both with helping contacts and with role support.

Personal factors that Cindy reports as influencing her

her role are her "general enjoyment of being around people" and that helping provides her with a "sense of satisfaction." She explains that a person "who does something for somebody else is supposed to forget it, but I don't think that really applies." She goes on to say that when she thinks about what she has done for others it makes her "feel really good."

Cindy also suggests that helping provides her with a more general sense of self worth when she comments, "the more people I can help the more worthwhile life is." Finally Cindy notes that a positive belief in herself and support from her friends tends to make her "optimistic" about helping whereas she says others "are afraid they might get hurt."

Cindy's helping role began during her high school years. Several developmental factors appeared to influence this onset. A reciprocal support relationship with her father and a supportive role to her mother both served to encourage her in helping. In addition her father places expectations on her which serve to increase her sense of responsibility to others. Both parents are generous and encourage Cindy to be the same. A period of difficulty in peer adjustment in junior high school and a related experience with drugs appear to develop in Cindy a strong identification with other persons experiencing isolation and rejection. The helping intervention of others during this time made Cindy quite conscious of the importance of providing support to others. As her own social position stabilized she became involved in several helping

experiences. The frequent daily contact with peers in her current setting helps Cindy broaden her role by making her more aware of the full range of problems people are experiencing. Her own personal network provides her with both personal and role support that enables her to extend herself to others. Helping appears to supply her with an immediate sense of well being and a more permanent feeling of positive self worth. The strength of the developmental influence in Cindy's role and the absence of any current role conflicts suggests that Cindy is likely to be successful in her goal to continue to develop and expand her helping role.

